

The Philippian Gospel



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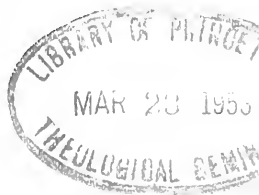
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THE PHILIPPIAN GOSPEL
OR
PAULINE IDEALS

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OR

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*A SERIES OF PRACTICAL MEDITATIONS
BASED UPON PAUL'S LETTER TO
THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI*

BY

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PREFACE

The series of simple expository sketches contained in this small volume are sent forth in the hope that thoughtful readers will find in them something of real suggestion and helpful stimulus. They cannot take the place of critical commentaries or elaborate theological essays; but, as a modest attempt to represent in modern words some of Paul's great thoughts, they may perhaps have a province of their own. Through such meditations we may, at least, learn that the revelation which the great apostle received from his Master and ours is neither ancient nor modern but a power of life through all time. The author's thanks are due to the Rev. M. McGillivray, D. D., of Chalmers Church, Kingston, for his careful reading of the manuscript and offer of useful suggestions. And special acknowledgment must be made of the service rendered by the Rev. Professor McFadyen of Knox College, Toronto, who on account of special circumstance took the responsibility of reading all the proof.

W. G. J.

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INTRODUCTION

"These men [The Reformers] were not hampered by the letter, for they were filled with the spirit. They readily changed their own phrases as light grew with progress of events; and they understood that their words were simply their testimonies, and not tests by which future generations were to be kept in spiritual bondage. When a church is able to utter its faith in the language of its own day, it gives proof that it is a living church, awake to the signs of the times; that it is progressive as well as conservative; and that it is able to face dangers, to expand with the growth of the free spirit, and to adjust itself to the larger environment in which men are now living."

[The closing words of an article on "The Outlook in Theology," contributed to the American Journal of Theology by George M. Grant, late Principal of Queen's University, Jan. 1902, shortly before his death and in the twenty-fifth year of his principalship; they express the vigour of faith and catholicity of spirit in which his great life-work was achieved.]

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The nature of this volume does not call for an elaborate "introduction" in the technical sense of the word. The scholars, who are seeking to stimulate a new and "advanced" movement of criticism in the region of early Christian literature, tell us, that; "The historical as distinguished from the abiding religious and ethical value of this writing, even though it makes no contribution to our knowledge of the life of Paul, is not slight. It throws light for us upon the history of Paulinism and the course of this quickening practical movement within Christianity during the first half of the second century." (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, page 3710.)

The short chapters which form the present volume are, of course, concerned chiefly with the religious teaching and moral influence of the epistle. They are written from the point of view generally accepted by New Testament scholars, that in it we possess a genuine letter of Paul, written from Rome about 60 A. D. This position naturally involves the belief that the document does contribute to our knowledge of a man and not simply a far-reaching movement, that it is a revelation of Paul's inward life, as well as a manifestation of Christian truth in and through him.

The personal element and the teaching seem to harmonize well, both in style and substance, with what we learn concerning the great apostle from other sources. What is said on the other side, though interesting and worthy of careful discussion by those who have the necessary opportunity and equipment, cannot be properly dealt with here. The present writer believes in the fullest freedom of discussion on all such matters; he recognises that the only way to meet arguments is to examine them in a sympathetic spirit and reasonable manner. In this case the arguments presented do not seem to him to be at all convincing. If the view now proposed by the few scholars who regard themselves as pioneers of a new and more thorough stage of historical investigation is to succeed in justifying itself, that can only come as the result of a long critical movement which will revolutionize our conception of "the early days of Christianity." But those who are confident that such a movement must take place, and in the end commend itself to all qualified judges, admit that the first tentative stages have not been passed. "Towards this important work little more than first essays have hitherto been made. The harvest promises to be plentiful but the labourers are yet too few." A movement which is thus described, by those who regard it as legitimate and hopeful is, at present, a matter for specialists and does not furnish results sufficiently secure for the practical expositor. One point, however, must be mentioned in this connection. Those of us who are most in sympathy with

minute critical investigation into details of history and language feel that, in the hands of certain critics, it is in danger of becoming too subjective and speculative; the creative, unifying force of personality and spiritual life is not grasped in any large living fashion. Readers, not quite destitute of the critical faculty, have been compelled to say, "You have the parts in your hand but the spiritual bond is lacking." We must allow the possibility of rapid development, in the case of a great man or an important period, when the revelations of many ages find their concentration and completion. "Schürer* (cit. by Godet) says: 'All the reasons advanced in this sphere against the authenticity, have weight only with him who makes the Apostle Paul, that most living and mobile spirit the world has ever seen, a man of habit and routine, who behooved to write each of his letters like all the others, to repeat in the following ones what he had said in the preceding, and to say it again always in the same way and in the same terms.'"

This, however, opens up a large subject which cannot receive here any adequate treatment or even statement. Those who desire that kind of discussion can easily find it in Bible dictionaries and critical commentaries. The homiletic element, which would be out of place there, is an appropriate feature of this small volume. An attempt is made, without technical discussion, to expand some of Paul's great thoughts and clothe them in the language of our own time, so that they may

*See Dr. Vincent's Commentary In the International Series, p. xxx.

thus be seen to have an important bearing upon our present life of thought and conduct.

After many years of experience in the work of the pulpit, it is the strong conviction of the present writer that one constant need of the ministry and the Church is the revival and continuance of intelligent expository preaching. This would seem to be self-evident to those who rejoice in the possession of an inspired literature with living authority and abiding power. And yet, as a matter of fact, the plea for preaching that shall show both close scientific study of the ancient literature and broad sympathy with the needs of modern life is neither unnecessary nor impertinent. The really modern man is the man who knows the past. We cannot retrace our steps; it is not possible to go back and copy earlier forms of life; we must face our own problems and fight our own battles. But we have in the words of prophets and apostles, and above all, in the teaching of our Lord, a real gospel, an everlasting message. The preacher is an interpreter who having proved in himself the power of this gospel, can bring it home to the hearts of men, who long for guidance and inspiration. The effort to understand the life of those who were the first preachers of our glorious faith is a means of mental culture, as well as of spiritual grace, a broadening of one's own vision, as well as a training for the teaching of others. The range of the pulpit in these days is wide, and there is no need for the thoughtful minister to be limited to any small circle of topics; but the central theme remains the same, the power of God's love, mani-

fested in Christ, to quicken and purify the whole of life. Here the two great forces of the written word and the living teacher meet and do their highest work. (Acts viii, 30, 31).

Of the following chapters it may simply be said that they have sprung from a desire to read in a teachable appreciative spirit the apostle's own words and to interpret them in a way that shall be helpful to the men and women who are seeking to be true to their Christian vocation, and suggestive to those who are beginning the same kind of expository work. Pursuing our task in this spirit we may expect the guidance and blessing of the Great Teacher who is at all times the light and life of the Church.

These meditations are utterly vain and feeble if they do not assist in deepening the impression that we have here a series of noble utterances, worthy of one, who being constrained by the love of Christ, poured out his life in the service of humanity. The character and purpose of the epistle are clearly and beautifully set forth in the following words taken from Dr. Vincent's admirable commentary:

"But while the character of the epistle is ethical rather than doctrinal or controversial, it gives no countenance to the tendency to resolve the gospel into a mere code of morals. The moral inspiration which it represents has its impelling centre in a person and a life, and not in a code. The personal Christ is its very heart. It exhibits Christ *in* Paul rather than *before* him. Christ is not a subject of controversy; he is not simply a

pattern of conduct. He is the sum of Paul's life. Paul's ideal is to be found in him. His death is not a sorrowful reminiscence; it has been shared by the apostle in his own death to sin. The view of the resurrection, which this letter in common with that to the Romans presents, is a standing rebuke to the superficial conception and loose grasp which the church too often brings to that truth. The resurrection is to Paul a present, informing energy and not only a memory and a hope. He would know the power of the resurrection now and here as well as hereafter. He not only lives according to Christ's life, he lives it. Christ loves, obeys, suffers, sympathises, toils, and hopes in him. Under the power of this life his own natural affection is transfigured. He knows not men after the flesh, but loves and longs for them in the heart of Christ Jesus.

With the exhibition of these facts goes the corresponding emphasis of the apostle's personality. The letter is more distinctly personal than any of the epistles to the churches except II. Corinthians. In this lies largely its peculiar fascination. But personality is accentuated on a different side. Its sensitive, indignant, self-vindictory aspect, so marked in the Corinthian letter, is completely in the background here. The Paul of the Philippian letter is not the man whose apostolic credentials have been challenged, and whose personal motives have been impugned; not the vindicator of himself and of his ministry against the pretensions of false apostles; not the missionary who is reluctantly constrained in his own defence to un-

fold the record of his labors and sufferings. He is the disciple who counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; for whom to live is Christ and to die is to be with Christ. What a blending of the restfulness of faith with the tenseness of aspiration! What an upreach of desire! With an experience behind him unique in its depth and richness and variety, with the memory of personal vision of Christ and of ravishment in the third heaven, with a profound knowledge of the mysteries of divine truth won through heart-shaking moral crises, in solitary meditation and in the vast experience of his missionary career,—his attainment is only a point for a larger outlook, an impulse to more vigorous striving. In Christ he is in a sphere of infinite possibilities, and he counts not himself to have apprehended, but stretches forward under the perpetual stress of his heavenward calling.”

A SUGGESTIVE SALUTATION

CHAPTER II

A SUGGESTIVE SALUTATION

(I 1, 2)

Paul, speaking of his converts, describes them as "living epistles known and read of all men." The phrase may well be used to describe the letters that came from his own pen, so lofty are they in thought, and so alive are they with spiritual feeling. This is a real letter, suffused with strong personal feeling, and not a great theological treatise like the epistle to the Romans, or a controversial tract such as was sent to the Galatians; at the same time, it is rich as a presentation of Christian truth, and a record of Christian experience. As the Apostle poured forth these burning words, he never dreamed that they would play such a large part in the future life of the world; he did his work with all the enthusiasm of a fully consecrated man, and God has given to him an immortality of usefulness.

Philippi is interesting to Christian people, not because it was a chief city of Macedonia and a Roman colony, not because here was fought the great battle when Octavius and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius, "the last of the republicans," but rather because it was the place where Christianity made its first appearance in Europe, and

where work was done that exercised an important and far-reaching influence on the Western movement of the new faith. By quiet teaching at the riverside, by conflict with superstition in the stirring streets, by heroic conduct in the dungeon, by dignified behavior before the magistrates, the power of a living religion commanded respect and conquered love. The sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is a wonder-record of missionary enterprise, and it is the proper companion to this epistle. The missionaries were providentially guided in this new direction, and the opening of the campaign is closely packed with those stirring incidents which are familiar to all readers of the Bible, and which make Philippi a classic spot in Christian history. It is not a matter of surprise, then, that Paul kept up communication with a place so memorable.

Paul had often longed to see Rome and preach the gospel in the centre of the Empire, and in a strange way he was taken there; to save his life and maintain the continuity of his work he had been compelled to appeal unto Cæsar. Two years of weary waiting did not crush him, but brought out in a clearer light his restless energy and victorious faith. Through sorrow, this bold, fearless man was only made more thoughtful and tender, and when at last he reaches the Imperial city, he has been prepared by a long and varied discipline to begin a new chapter in his wonderful career. The conflicts in Palestine, the law's delay at Cæsarea, the toilsome journey by land and sea,—these in a way unexpected, lead him to the new

strange scene of suffering and triumph, and the desire he had long cherished is fulfilled, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." (Rom. I, 15)

Paul in prison and Nero on the throne form a striking contrast. Nero could play both the cruel tyrant and the contemptible fool. His black crimes we do not dare to mention; yet he wore the purple and sat on the imperial throne, while the noblest man of all the age languished in a dungeon near the palace. That contrast did not trouble Paul, for he did not expect a present reward, or think that sacred service could be paid for in this world's coin. It need not trouble us when we think of Nero's shameful end and everlasting disgrace, or of Paul's good fight and crown of righteousness.

The large generosity and dignified feeling of the man are seen in the first words of the epistle, "Paul and Timothy bond slaves of Christ Jesus." There is no mock humility and no straining after supremacy. In some cases Paul was compelled to assert his apostolic dignity; but he disliked that kind of self assertion, and he carefully avoided it in addressing those who had shown to him both love and loyalty. To them he can adopt a simpler tone, and this allows him to join with himself the youthful Timothy. Timothy is in a sense his servant and pupil, but they are both slaves of Christ. Paul was sensitive as to his authority when the question involved the originality and power of his message, but no man cherished a keener contempt for petty jealousy. He saw clearly that each real man will take his own place

and do his own work while recognising the significance of the work done by others (1 Cor. 3; 1-9) This word "slave" is often used by Paul, and with him it has real meaning, and is not an affectation of extreme humility, but the confession of full surrender to Jesus as Saviour, Teacher, and King. He resists the tyranny of tradition, and the bigotry of the elders, but when Jesus speaks he is ready to obey. He is a splendid example of the fact that the slave of Christ is God's free man, that intense discipleship is consistent with strong individuality. When the proud Pharisee, the prejudiced Jew was led captive by love and bound in its golden chains, he entered into a freer atmosphere and breathed a larger life.

Paul addresses the Christian church at Philippi, and then refers to the office-bearers of the congregation. This is a peculiar form of salutation, found only in this place; we cannot be quite sure of the reason that led the apostle to use it, unless it was that in the letter from the Church special prominence had been given the bishops and deacons. Paul applies to the general body of disciples the noble name "saints." There is something tragic in the way great words are misused, and then pass out of use. This word "saint," which did such honourable service in the apostolic times, has almost ceased to be used in a living practical way, being now too often used in an artificial sense, or spoken in a sarcastic tone. It does not here claim that the disciples are faultless, or that they have attained their full growth in the Christian life, but it indicates the calling, the

hope, and the destiny of the true believer. The hope of purity, the longing for perfection moved the heart of the Christian man, and constituted the new and high ambition that Christ had kindled in his soul. To become like Christ is the Christian's destiny, the divine decree for those whose faith links them to the source of eternal life.

When we leave the words which speak of the deepest life, and come to those which refer to ecclesiastical organization, we are in danger of being seized by a strong sectarian spirit and carried into regions of fierce controversy. At the present time both historical science and Christian charity protest against such a course. Those who need and desire elaborate discussions on these matters can easily find them; they would certainly be out of place in these brief expositions. Paul was living in the free formative period of the Church, he was scarcely the kind of man to place supreme value on a cast-iron organization, and he certainly thought of the Church as a living body possessing elasticity of movement, and power of adaptation. It is difficult, perhaps we should say impossible, to show that certain definite "orders" of ministry existed in the Church then exactly as now. Paul seems to use "bishop" and "elder" in substantially the same sense. In his speech to the elders at Ephesus he says that God has made them overseers or bishops, and when he instructs Titus to ordain elders, he immediately calls these elders bishops. The word elder (presbyter) came from the Jewish synagogue, the word bishop (episcopos) from a Greek secular

office; in the earliest days they were both applied to men who preached, ministered, and administered, in later times they were distinguished from one another, and the bishop became the ruler of the clergy. The first book of Christian church history, "the Acts of the Apostles," tells of the appointment of "deacons" to meet a special emergency, but it is possible that afterwards different workers were denoted by that name. Here, however, the reference to the Church officers is quite incidental. The question of organization was not at all prominent in the Apostle's thought; he was dwelling in a serener sphere when he sent this greeting of grace and peace. There is much truth in the statement that "Paul is a sower of ideas, not a methodical administrator; a despiser of ecclesiastical forms and of ritualism; a mighty idealist filled with Christian enthusiasm, and who knew no other church government than that of Christ himself inspiring his disciples with the knowledge of what they ought to say and do."

It is a salutation and a prayer; Paul links together in his thought the disciples and their Lord. He places old words in new combinations, and gives them a higher tone. "Grace" was the salutation of the energetic, cultured Greek, and "peace" that of the devout, disciplined Jew. The Greek appreciated the beauty of the world and the glory of life, and wished for his friend's intense active joy; the Hebrew revered the divine law and prayed to be at peace with God and man. The Christian religion had a spirituality of tone that was lacking in that of the Greeks, and a clear communion with

the Father to which the Jew had never attained. Jesus was to the disciple "the ideal man," for whom the noblest Greeks had hungered, and the manifestation of God for which the prophets had personally prayed. It is the fashion now to prescribe "the Greek idea of life" as a cure for narrowness and a source of "sweetness and light," and when that is really a counsel of breadth and charity there is no need to despise it. Neither ought we to despise the reverence and restraint symbolised by the old Hebrew discipline and its practical view that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. "Grace and peace" do not come by painful penance, or continuous self-culture, but by accepting God's mercy and trusting His great love. The Christian life is inspired by the revelation of love, and hence it is equal to the high demands of law. It is through the Cross that law and love find their highest meaning and most real reconciliation. The blessings that Nero with all his wealth could not buy, and Seneca with all his learning could not discover, Paul found through self-surrender to the rejected Nazarene. Through the loss of self he found a higher life; finding God in the lowly life of the gentlest Man he came to the possession of grace and peace, of inward satisfaction and restless aspiration.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

(PHIL. I, 3-5)

This epistle is in many ways a beautiful manifestation of the fact that a true man is not a creature of circumstances. It was written in prison and in a strange land. The apostle Paul at this time was often weak and lonely, oppressed with cares and harassed by many distressing circumstances, and yet his letter has a triumphant tone. The words "joy" and "rejoice" occur thirteen times within short space. He who sang in the dungeon at Philippi can sing in the prison at Rome. Though he has many heavy burdens and is uncertain as to his fate he maintains confidence in God, and speaks cheerfully to his fellow-disciples. Many a man in such circumstances would have been distracted by doubts and overmastered by fears but Paul was a strong man and had a firm trust in the Eternal God.

Paul shows in his letters what we may call the orator's tact, the sympathetic feeling which leads a man to seek to be on good terms with his audience. He always begins in a kindly tone, even in dealing with those churches where grave offence had to be condemned and false doctrines combatted, he begins by saying all the good that he can. This is not mere policy or superficial politeness; in him it is

genuine Christian feeling, which causes him to restrain his impetuous energy and consider the weakness of his companions. He knew that a teacher must above all men be patient and hopeful. He was not a narrow zealot or fanatic but kept himself in sympathy with all honest forms of life and work. The life of the Philippian church seems to have been comparatively pure and earnest. He did not feel that it called for any severe criticism, so he gives full course to his expressions of thankfulness and confidence.

The great missionary at this stage of his life had very little happiness, as the world esteems happiness, but he had great blessedness. If you read over the Beatitudes of our Lord you will find that many of them were realised in the life of Paul. He had the true blessedness which springs from a rich inward life. He had been poor, hungry, sorrowful, persecuted and had been able to make of all these evils "stepping stones to higher things." This blessedness is a gift of God's grace to the trustful soul, that is the only explanation. It is not a thing of wealth, genius or success. In Paul it showed itself in two ways. (1) In a deliberate looking at the bright side of things. That to him was God's side. In the dark night he looked to the eternal stars of heaven, which no earthly power can dim; instead of looking at what he had suffered and lost he looked to what God had given him.

"Some murmur when the sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If but one spot of dim appear
In their great heaven of blue

And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light
One ray of God's good mercy gild
The darkness of their night."

Paul was one of those who are keen to detect blessings and ever ready to give thanks to God. (2) His blessedness of heart and life showed itself further in his readiness to rejoice with or over others. On this point F. W. Robertson has a just and beautiful remark. He says the prizes of life are few; if we cannot be content unless we have a whole kid we shall make ourselves miserable; the greatest joy comes from the power to rejoice when the fattened calf is killed for our brother. Paul found his blessedness increased through the life of his converts; the more they prospered the more he felt that it was meet for him to rejoice and be glad. As a teacher loves to see his pupils advance in knowledge, as a general rejoices in the bravery of his soldiers, as a father is glad because of the growth and happiness of his children, so Paul rejoiced in the Christian life that was flourishing at Philippi. One of his constant sources of joy was the thought of those whom he had been the means of leading to Christ.

Here he clearly and emphatically expresses his thankfulness for their spiritual life and his confidence in them. He has no suspicions or fears in regard to them. They have shown their love to Christ and their kindness towards him, and so whenever he thinks of them he can pray for them with a joyful heart and a hopeful spirit. This confidence Paul expresses in the 6th verse, "Being

confident of this very thing," a verse which demands separate treatment; here he renders thanks for the fellowship into which these disciples have entered. He thanks God for what they have experienced and in his prayers beseeches for them a larger life. This very prayer both in its substance and its form is a manifestation of the spiritual fellowship of which he speaks. Paul feels that as he draws near to the throne of God he is very near to his Philippian brethren and can make their joys and sorrows his own. This is the nature of real prayer; in bringing you near to God it brings you near to all your loved ones, it brings you near to all the saints of God. All those who really pray to God through Christ are by that very act bound into a spiritual family.

He is very careful to say that his prayer embraces the whole congregation, not any clique or special class. Some might think that he thought only of office-bearers and great people and that the poor and feeble were forgotten, but it was not so; every member of that little struggling community was included in his fervent prayer for life and blessing. A congregation is like a living body, every member has his own place and peculiar use; the great Shepherd and Bishop of the sheep cares for all in a way that Paul strove to imitate.

These Philippians possessed a great blessing in which Paul rejoices and for which he gives thanks; that is, the blessing of Christian fellowship, they had received the glad tidings of salvation through Christ, they had part and lot in the new Christian kingdom. They had fellowship in the enjoyment

of the Gospel, and fellowship in the spreading of it. They had become co-workers with God and fellow-workers with Paul. The first result of the preaching of the Gospel was that it created a new fellowship in the world, different from anything that had ever been in it before. The word fellowship here is the word communion and means to have something in common. A number of children living in one family and having the same father and mother have fellowship on that basis. They possess the same nature of body and soul, they are sheltered and blessed by the same love, they cherish love for the same persons, and so long as they dwell together on those terms they have fellowship, that is, they share a common life. Family life is a pure and beautiful form of fellowship and without it a nation cannot reach any high and holy life.

The great fact of our life is that we were made for fellowship. We were not made to be shut up within ourselves. No man can reach the highest life that is possible to him by living in loneliness, however much he may study great truths, or however much he may deny himself. By giving life to others and receiving life from them we realise the life that is in ourselves. Religion is in the highest sense fellowship with God and man.

Paul was prepared to make one claim on behalf of the Christian religion, and that was that it had brought within the reach of all the highest spiritual fellowship. It had broken down barriers of nationality and caste and opened the way to a larger social life. The thought of a religion for all was new at that time. Every nation had its own form

of religion. The Roman religion was different from the Greek and the Jewish religion was unlike either. The Jews had a glorious revelation of God in their sacred writings, but they guarded it in an exclusive spirit. The Romans worshipped many gods and even turned their own emperor into a god as soon as he was dead, so that one of them said in bitter jest, when he was about to die, that he was turning into a god. This kind of religion was more a thing of politics than of living personal faith. The Greeks who once possessed a noble mythology and a lofty philosophy were now weak in both patriotism and piety. The Egyptians and all the other conquered races had each their peculiar superstitions. The conquerors were jealous of any new movements but allowed large liberty to old established religions. The state of things had been well summed up in the following sentence "The people regarded all their religions as equally true, the philosophers thought them all false, and the magistrates reckoned them all useful." The use of religion was to frighten the people and keep them in order. Before the Gospel was preached, there was not to any large extent such a thing as a common religious fellowship among people of different countries. There was a political fellowship that men coveted. The Roman Empire exerted a mighty influence throughout the sphere of the then known world and it was a privilege and an advantage for a man to be able to say, "I am a Roman citizen." This citizenship as an honour and reward had been conferred on men of various nationalities. Paul was a Roman citizen and wore this honour with modest dignity.

THE POWER AND PROMISE OF
CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER AND PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

(I, 6)

This is an age of criticism and controversy. Intelligent men are stirred by an eager questioning spirit which investigates the foundations of every accepted belief. Everywhere we hear the din of debate and the noise of conflict. The most sacred subjects are handled with fearless freedom, the oldest beliefs are pushed aside to make way for the newest theories, the conceptions of God which have been cherished for centuries are sometimes ridiculed as the lingering remnants of a foolish superstition, creeds and definite statements of faith are denounced as tending rather to fetter the intellect than inspire the heart.

While there is probably less of coarse vulgar infidelity, and thoughtful men show a respect for religion while at the same time feeling a distrust of dogma, the spirit of bold restless discussion seeks to manifest its presence in all quarters within or without the church. At times the very fierceness of the conflict produces weariness and begets a longing for some final external authority, but that is only a passing phase, a temporary lull in the everlasting battle. The greatest difficulty to de-

vout people is caused by the action of the critical spirit within the church, as it subjects the ancient documents to severe examination and propounds revolutionary views concerning the history of our religion. Some regard this activity as a sign of health, others treat it as a symptom of disease. At present we cannot debate this issue but must simply emphasise the feeling of uncertainty that is begotten in the minds of men who make no pretension to critical sharpness or philosophic culture. They lose confidence in religion and think that it is impossible to be confident regarding anything spiritual. The clouds of dust which rise from scenes of theological strife cause some to lose their way and to doubt whether there is any reliable path. When we drift into this irritating uncertainty, a confident tone in others seems to be intolerable dogmatism. And yet it remains true that in relation to vital matters uncertainty is a weakness and confidence gives strength. We are not fed by doubts and difficulties but by truths that we see clearly and love intensely. A man can only be calm, strong, and influential, in proportion as he possesses truth upon which he can rest in patient hope. There is no faltering hesitancy in the apostle's tone; these words uttered in the face of Jewish tradition and Greek speculation come with true originality and tremendous power, "Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." The speaker is not dealing directly with historic facts or intellectual conceptions but with spiritual experience. He asserts

strongly the fact of real intercourse between God and man. This specific work of God within the soul is to him the highest manifestation of the divine.

There is nothing that we need to realize more in the stress of conflict than this, the reality of religious experience, the possibility of pure communion between man and God. Different scientific theories as to the nature of light do not lead us to doubt the existence of the sun, different opinions as to the methods of cultivation do not hinder us from enjoying the fruits of the earth; in the same way we ought to see that, important as they are, many of these intellectual discussions do not touch the central fact of redemption. While we see many things through a glass darkly, we may be sure of this, that God worketh in us and that by the power of His love manifest in Jesus we are delivered from the dominion of prejudice and passion.

Intellectual activity is essential to the health of the Christian church; the truth will survive the ordeal of the fiercest discussion. But mere argument and speculation separated from faith and devotion are full of danger for the individual man. The man who possesses the religious life which quickens all his power of thought, feeling, and will, is also the man best fitted for freedom in all forms of investigation. Confident faith must not be confounded with narrow dogmatism, both the narrowness and the dogmatism are signs rather of scepticism or of a half faith that is ill at ease.

I. THIS EXPERIENCE IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN

The truth which Paul declares here he repeats in the next chapter where he tells us that it is "God that worketh in us." Thus he claims a divine origin for the experience of the humblest soul, he says that our religious life is a spark from the heavenly fire, our devotion is the result of a wondrous inspiration. By Christian experience we mean the struggles with sin, the longings after purity, the feeling of calm confidence in God, the personal attachment to the Lord Jesus. These are the marks of true discipleship, they are not the fancies of fanatics, they are not the morbid product of an over-heated imagination, they come to us from the eternal God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer knows that his life is changed and glorified by the vision of the Christ. Those who laugh at this experience as an unreal thing, as feeble mysticism which will not stand the searching light of science simply show the shallowness of a scepticism which seeks to ignore one of the mightiest powers that the world has ever known. All the great prophets and apostles, leaders and heroes claim that their power to face a hard unbelieving world comes from the indwelling spirit of God. If we could imagine the history of man to be bereft of all that has been created by the fire of religious enthusiasm and by the inspiration of Christian hope it would present a very dismal picture. Only that which comes from God can lift men heavenward; human selfishness, mean and sordid, must gravitate towards hell.

It is not enough to believe that God has inspired

angels and sent them with messages of peace to men, that He put burning words in the mouths of prophets, that He has revealed the highest truth through the medium of His Son, we must cherish a living faith in the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Why should we stumble here? The sun pours its rich refreshing rays on the grandest tree and the meanest plant, the common air ministers to the lowly peasant as well as to the proud prince, the same Lord is rich unto all who call upon him. "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me." Two closely related facts—the poverty of man and the thoughtfulness of God.

II. THE INWARDNESS OF THE EXPERIENCE

It is not in the realm of the senses, it does not merely play upon the surface; it is a power working through the inmost life controlling the very centre of thought and feeling. The ceremonialism of the ritualist and the argumentation of the rationalist are small and insufficient; they are only parts of the living whole. This life must manifest itself in many ways but this working of God, this divine process is the hidden source, the secret spring of noblest life. Now, when so much is said about the social side of religion, and "the saving of the soul" is branded as spiritual selfishness we must remember the mystic experience. He who is to bring religion to bear on social problems must solve the personal problem and learn the meaning of reconciliation to God through Christ.

Food must be received and assimilated in order to be transformed into flesh and blood; new knowl-

edge must blend and harmonize with the whole life of the mind; so the power of love must work through the hidden nature before it can show its print in Christian character. The spreading branches of the lofty tree are dependent on the healthy roots which run widely underneath the soil, and so continuity of obedience, consistency of outward action, can only come from living influences that work from within.

III. THIS EXPERIENCE MAY SEEM SMALL IN ITS BEGINNINGS

God gives the beginning of the mighty river in the slender stream that comes rippling down the mountain side, He has hidden the gigantic oak in the tiny acorn, and He can bring a noble influential life out a single fruitful moment of heavenward desire. The beginning may be quiet and unobserved, but the work is steady and reliable. We cannot tell when God first begins to work in our hearts, we cannot look back and say, on such a day God first began to bless us. We may chronicle the time when we first became conscious of the divine ministry, when we first listened with heedful attention to the heavenly voice. There is no need for us to be anxious because our experience has not been of a startling sensational character. Paul, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan and many others can tell of masterful visions and clear conversion but they would be the last to demand that the Spirit should work always in the same way. The light of heaven may come into human life in various

ways; sometimes it bursts through the stormy darkness and shows sensational signs, at other times it appears with unostentatious gentleness. The important thing is not the mode but the reality. Our dissatisfaction with self, our longing after forgiveness, our desire for purity and peace. These beginnings of life are divinely inspired, they have in them the promise and perfection of heaven. A conversion that is abrupt and decided is still only a beginning; hope for our future, not admiration for our past, is always the proper attitude. God is ever calling us forward, and we must be co-workers with Him.

IV. THROUGH REAL PROGRESS THIS EXPERIENCE WILL REACH A GLORIOUS COMPLETION

Paul's confidence is firmly fixed in the living fatherly God, there is no failure or fickleness with Him. The beginning, small as it is, gives the proof of the divine purpose and the pledge of victory. The sympathetic eye of the Saviour sees the ideal in each life while it is still an unfulfilled prophecy. It is good that there are quick movements of the will, mighty impulses of the Spirit, when the soul seems to leap from the bondage of habit and face grander possibilities, but there must also be calm continuous growth, increasing receptiveness to the power of God. "Being saved" is a New Testament phrase that should have a corresponding experience in our life. Salvation is not simply to receive forgiveness and wait in rapturous expectation of heaven, it is a living process advancing constantly

to higher, nobler stages. It is consecration to high aims and strenuous endeavours, it is social service as well as solitary worship.

The great architect will not leave the building until the top-stone is laid on with rejoicing; the captain of our salvation will lead us at last into the streets of the celestial city, the life begun in feebleness shall be raised in power. The service of earth is preparatory to the service of heaven, the purest songs of earth are but a prelude to the richer music of the Spirit-world. If we are co-workers with God, we have part in a movement that shall reach its consummation in the glory of the day of Jesus Christ when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. We must pass through many a struggle, and many times we tremble in the darkness, but we shall emerge into the full clear light of day. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known."

PAUL'S LOVE FOR HIS CONVERTS

CHAPTER V

PAUL'S LOVE FOR HIS CONVERTS

(I 7, 8)

We are compelled constantly to note the strength and the sincerity of personal feeling manifested in this wonderful letter. The present passage is a striking illustration of that; it expresses nobly the fact that when Paul was in great trouble he still found time and energy to dwell upon the tender relationship that existed between himself and his disciples. When Paul and Silas sang the songs of Zion in the prison at Philippi, they cheerfully took their place in the long line of martyrs who had proved that stone walls do not make a prison and that the world cannot enslave those who are God's free men. To regard this merely as a piece of history concerning men who have long been done with this busy world is a superficial view. Such history concerns us in so far as it manifests the nature of the Christian religion and reveals the secret of its power.

Paul is thankful because these Philippians have been brought into the new fellowship which has been created through the preaching of the Gospel, and because he can now declare that they share with him in the grace by which the Gospel is defended and diffused. The work of God having been

begun in their souls, he is confident that it will be carried to a glorious completion. This is not flattery, Paul was not the man to prophesy smooth things for the sake of winning applause. The man who seeks to find favour by flattery is a fool, sensible people are not so easily deceived, they know the ring of genuine honest words. Before we cherish any such suspicion regarding Paul, let us hear his justification and try to understand his spirit.

“Even as it was just for me to be thus minded towards you because I have you in my heart.” In other words Paul is justified in speaking well of these people because he loves them; that which would be disgusting if spoken through selfish policy is natural and beautiful when it springs from love. The father speaking great things concerning his boy may seem to be indulging in needless extravagance of language, but we construe it generously as the expression of love and hope. It is not true that “love is blind”; reckless passion, mad infatuation may be blind, but love is full of eyes and sees many things hidden from the common gaze. Love is not coldly critical and certainly not suspicious, it delights in hope, but it is the hope based upon insight into the hidden nature that is struggling to unfold itself. The mother sees promise of usefulness in her boy before others have detected it, and in this case love helps to fulfil its own prophecy. It is in this atmosphere that we must read Paul’s word concerning his converts. Such love may have its disappointments, but it is “better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”

Love has a revealing power, it lights the path-

way of real knowledge. The man in whom we take no living interest is a sealed book to us. The person towards whom we feel a strong antipathy is liable to serious misinterpretation on our part; in this case we are in danger of seeing only the small and vile. The one whom we love we do know, so far as it is given to human beings to share each other's life. Paul was not preaching this philosophy of human intercourse, but indirectly he suggests it.

This true sympathy just as much as the divine power of the truth accounts for Paul's successful ministry. He was a powerful thinker, a persuasive speaker, an able writer. His letters are remarkable for forceful logic, impetuous energy and delicacy of feeling. But behind all his varied intellectual activity there throbbed the power of a mighty heart. We Western people may be naturally more reserved, but there is no reason for us to be ashamed of emotion. The glory of the strongest man is that after all life's shocks he can cherish the power of a simple childlike love. That Paul was a strong man does not need to be stated, that he hated false professions is self-evident, but we see that he was not ashamed to write "love letters" assuring his converts that they dwell in his soul and share his life.

This was not gratitude, Paul had done more for these people than they for him. Sacrifice does not exhaust love but only increases it. The mother loves her child the more because she has poured out her life for it. If Paul had stayed in one place and spent all his time studying books he might

have lived a noble intellectual life and have produced many speculations and conjectures; but he could not have written in this fashion, because his heart would have been shut to the needs and cares of common life. Coming in contact with Jew and Greek, bond and free, he learned that all have the same life, they bear similar burdens of sin and shame, every man fights in his own way the battle of humanity. Thus every individual life has its interest for the man who is seeking to help and inspire men.

Paul was a self-sufficient man, but he had learned that he needed men just as much as they needed him. He could call God to witness that he longed after them, he was hungry for their companionship. Fellowship in the deepest sense was as needful as bread or books. To the great thinker the Christian religion has never been completely summed up in the saving of the individual soul. There is a man who says "I do not need people, I have plenty in my own home or set, I have work to do and I have pleasure for my leisure hours, I am self-contained, I do not need to sing and pray with other people. What have I to do with poor folks and stupid people, and why should I make myself agreeable to those who are nothing to me?" This is plausible, but it is at the same time foolish and selfish. If you have any power to teach and serve others you can only neglect that power on pain of a great penalty, the penalty of belittling yourself, hardening your heart and narrowing your life. Like his Lord, Paul laid down his life and it came back in new sweetness and strength.

(1) This is in a real sense a new missionary spirit. The Gospel both on the side of its rich spiritual contents and its many-sided life had had a long preparation, and it came to flower and fruitage in "the fulness of time." Statesmen have lived in the spirit of sacrifice, prophets have proclaimed God's righteousness and mercy, thinkers have pondered reverently the mysteries of life, poets have drawn sweet songs out of the hour of sorrow. All that is true, and it is also true that this lonely Jew fettered at Rome is a new kind of missionary, his life marks an epoch in the religious history of the world. To philosophers at Athens, to rude people among the hills of Lycaonia, to the proud Pharisees at Jerusalem, to the conquerors of the world at Rome he proclaims the same message of man's need and Christ's forgiveness. In this form missionary activity was a strange thing, a turning of the world upside down. It was branded as insanity or fanaticism, but it was really the love of God working in the soul of a great man.

(2) This fellowship and work is the true "apology" and confirmation of the Gospel. Paul claims this as his work but he does not assert monopoly in it. In others letters Paul has given proof of his power to apologize and defend in the intellectual sense, but here, and indeed throughout, he suggests that the best defence of the Gospel is to live it. It is not the ministry standing alone, as a separate caste, but the ministry as representative and guide reflecting the truth by the help of faithful people. The people uphold the minister, their prayers create the atmosphere in which the

highest preaching is possible, their lives show forth the truth for which he is contending; suffering and working together, minister and people share the same grace.

(3) As Paul is a link between the disciples and Christ, so it is through them and not through letters or books that he hopes to reach the great circle outside. He cares for them for their own sakes, but also thinks of them as the means by which others are to be quickened and blessed. The true hearers are not simply the minister's congregation; they are his medium of action upon the world that is beyond his power of direct contact. Those whom Paul called "living epistles," are gone long ago, while the written word remains, but we must remember that the faith has been kept alive and defended by the long line of loyal men and noble women. Let us rejoice in "apostolic succession," if only we make the idea broad enough. Not through centuries of vacuum but through an atmosphere made vital by the prayers and hopes of noble souls has the sacred deposit of truth been handed down from age to age. The man who can truly say "I have you in my heart," will have his message of love scattered in ways that will fulfil his highest hopes.

(4) In this way the true "enthusiasm of humanity" is inspired by Christian faith. This faith in the power of grace, and the possibility of spiritual growth is a great stimulus to interest in men. The feeling that it begets is not that the Church is an institution which men should be proud to have the privilege of supporting,

but that the Church is the company of believers in Jesus Christ going forth to minister in His name and by the power of His spirit saying sincerely "We seek not yours but you." The Church lives by the giving of herself in highest service. In the days of Paul the Church had no imposing visibility, no elaborate machinery, no magnificent ceremonies; all that she had was spiritual life manifesting itself in tender lowly ways, and that is the one thing needful, the other things may be either helps or hindrances, but this is essential. If this life of love was supreme, spiritual life would be revealed in social service and there would not be so many to cry, "No man cares for my soul."

(5) This helpful service has its source in the love of Christ. "I long after you all in the bowels (or tender mercies) of Jesus Christ." Paul knows his own experience, he understands his own life, he sees clearly what power it is that has delivered him from pride and exclusiveness. Because he can say "the love of Christ constraineth me" he can also say "I long after you all." During His life-time our Lord was compelled to confine His teaching and personal contact to a small circle, but now in the person of the men who are born into a new hope He goes forth to all the world. They show that the love of Christ is the mightiest influence for linking men together and creating true fellowship. No other force will in the same way bridle passion, destroy prejudice, and subdue pride. This doctrine teaches us to regard helpful work for men as the truest service of God, and makes "the communion of saints" not a distant ideal but a daily possibility.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR HIS CONVERTS

CHAPTER VI

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR HIS CONVERTS

(I 9-11)

The first statement we read concerning Paul, as a Christian disciple, is the significant sentence "Behold he prayeth." His reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ gave new meaning and power to his prayers. To him the well known words can be most appropriately applied,

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

The Christian religion did not create prayer, or make it the subject of new commands, but its higher revelation and deeper experience gave to prayer a larger range, more varied expression and sweeter influence. The Hebrew people did not lack noble models of prayer. The Book of Psalms is a rich collection of hymns and prayers. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray without vain repetition or false pretension, but with real boldness and lowly persistency. Paul has caught the same spirit and shows his usual originality in the diversified application of prayer to the needs of personal and social life.

This epistle is suffused with personal feeling, every line bears witness to the master's enthusiastic love and admiration for his Philippian disciples,

but he who disclaims perfection for himself does not claim it for them. Instead, however, of directly criticising their weak points, he tenderly suggests their needs by telling them what are the things for which he is prompted to plead powerfully to God on their behalf. This indirect mode of exhortation is effective; it is a noble combination of tact and sympathy; it unites generous recognition of present achievement with the faith that demands still larger enterprise.

The prayer thus represents Paul's conception of Christianity; by expressing the Christian's supreme desire, he shows the real spirit and purpose of the Christian life. "I am come that ye might have life" is the Master's claim. Paul's prayer in its yearning after the fulness of that life shows us its content and character, its aim and aspiration. Enlargement, refinement, enrichment of life is the sum and substance of the prayer. It is intensely spiritual, it is in line with the apostle's own exhortation "Covet earnestly the best gifts." It lifts us into a realm above all jangling controversy, into the calm regions above the clouds. Such prayer is the expression of the deepest self in the presence of God, it is childlike, simple, yet it is the source of strength. The man who thus goes out after God comes back to the world's strife and the daily care of his own life with the breath of heaven fresh upon his soul.

The central fact, the inspiring force of the Christian life is love. "God so loved the world." Here we have a statement as to the source of redemption, the first point in its marvellous history. Then,

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Paul found in the Old Testament the preparation of redemption through the preaching of men inspired by the love of God, and by pity for their fellows. And as the great culmination there comes the actual manifestation of redemption in His Son. It is all love, love teaching, toiling and suffering. Out of all this comes the realization of redemption when the penitent soul bowing before the Cross can say "We love because He first loved us." The Philippians had been won by the preaching of that love, their present need is growth in the same spirit so that the whole of their life may be enriched and transfigured.

THE WELL-BALANCED LIFE

Paul desires a noble symmetry of life. He conceives of love as a spiritual force but not as mere emotion or rapture. This love must grow in knowledge, it must advance in keenness and clearness of perception. Paul is not sectarian in his treatment of the soul; he does not, as we are apt to do, set one faculty or function against another. He would cherish both intelligence and enthusiasm and have them fairly blended and well-balanced. Love must grow but it must grow into the light, it must increase in insight, it must have a larger outlook as well as greater intensity. Never was there a teacher who would be less content than Paul to have the religion of his converts remain a matter of mere outward rule however correct, or of blind impulse however strong. Paul here claims for religion the emotional, the intellectual and æsthetic sides of the personal life, all of them,

and altogether. In his view the Christian life must be full, symmetrical, well balanced. Human nature has been torn apart by sectarianism; attempts have been made to build churches upon one faculty of human nature or on one side of human life. "We appeal to the intellect" says one, "We speak to the heart" cries another, "We show forth the beauty of worship" claims a third. All that is to Paul just as much sectarianism as the thing that he rebukes so sharply in the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians. He desires that his disciples shall grow in all these directions and combine all these gifts. Nowhere does his conception of life shine out more clearly than in this beautiful comprehensive prayer in which he longs after the highest good of those who are in a spiritual sense his children.

Growth in religious experience means for Paul enlargement of personality, it is the life of the soul with all its capacities quickened, blossoming out in all possible directions, into new forms of loveliness and helpfulness. Those who in our own day lay claim to catholicity of sympathy and think they have a monopoly of "sweetness and light" would do well to consider the wonderful range as well as the intense spirituality of this apostle of the new faith. He sees the importance of the social order; for him even in dark days of persecution the powers that be are ordained of God; he gives a picture of the Church as an organic unity which is at once philosophic and poetic; but for him the supreme power is the living personality enfranchised by the truth and constrained by the love of

Christ. This leads him to see tremendous possibilities in the lives of men who have been neglected or starved; to the faith that links them to Jesus, to the love that opens the door of heaven, all things are possible. Hence this strong man is patient toward weakness and reserves his fiery scorn for hypocrisy and bigotry. His passionate persistent prayer is that those who are babes in Christ may advance to the maturity of Christian life.

(1) This life is marked by brotherly love that moves in the light of knowledge and is endowed with a fine sensitiveness, a keen, delicate perception of the fitness of things. The inspiration of such a life is the love of Christ which, when it draws men to Himself, links them together, in a real spiritual friendship. To be a Christian is to be in the real sense a gentleman; love rightly understood is an enlightening and refining influence. Kindly sentiment and joyful enthusiasm are good and are often found in great fulness at the beginning of the Christian life, especially in those who have been suddenly lifted into the glory of a new experience and thrilled by a new hope. That these powers need to be guided by increase of intelligence and new delicacy of feeling is manifest. The more perfect knowledge of Jesus, the fuller insight into the meaning and power of His life—this need not lessen the intensity of emotion but it will guide it into right channels, and give it nobler modes of manifestation. Love will thus gain a larger outlook into God's great world, and will, at the same time, find new beauty in the little world in which it moves.

(2) This means an increase in spiritual discernment in one's own conduct, as well as a richer harmony between ourselves and the fellowship to which we belong. "To distinguish things that differ" or "to approve things that are excellent." This means a thoughtful life, it is the attitude of a soul always active and alert. It does not presuppose that the disciple has a priest whom he can consult in every emergency and who will take the responsibility in doubtful cases, or that he carries in his pocket a programme with detailed prescriptions for every day and hour. Those courses may be easier, but they are the easy ways that lead to weakness and stagnation. The constant exercise of moral discrimination under the guidance of God's spirit will give a man the power to choose the true and beautiful with instinctive speed and accuracy. The fierce battles in the wilderness of temptation will issue in calm, clear choice in the face of perplexing circumstances.

(3) The discipline will have two results for which Paul prays and hopes; (a) *Purity of life*. A life that will stand the test of the light of Christ's presence, and a life that is helpful, not harmful, to the society in which it moves. This life may not be absolutely perfect but it is genuine, there is no sham or unreality about it. This is the life of a man who endeavours to live always in the light of God's judgment. The apostle does not say, all life according to my rule, or a life that will win applause, but a life that will bear the light of heaven and that will not place a stumbling-block in the way of the brethren.

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(b) Paul can never be content with a negative view, however noble that may be; this life must be in the fullest sense fruitful. Abstinence from a few evil or questionable things may suffice to make a conventional Christian, but falls far short of the aspiration of a living disciple. The very word "fruit" suggests life, it speaks of the healthy root, the good soil, the dew and rain, the sun and air. The fruits of gentle goodness and peaceful purity are the sure proof of Christ's redeeming power and the highest form of praise to God. God is glorified when the life of His Son re-appears in the varied lowly forms of discipleship. This is the real "eucharist," it is not confined to temples or limited to holy festival or sacred song, the godly life joins on to all God's noblest works, it is the highest hymn of creation.

PAUL THE PRISONER

CHAPTER VII

PAUL THE PRISONER

(I 12-20)

This, like many another short passage in his writings, mirrors for us the powerful personality of the apostle; it shows his clear conviction, his unconquerable confidence, his tender consideration for others. He refers to his imprisonment not for the sake of winning sympathy but in order to lessen the anxiety of his friends. Without affectation or pretension he calls them to rejoice in the fact that his sufferings had been overruled for the general good.

CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROVIDENCE

Paul did not seek persecution; the path of duty led directly to the prison door. Yet he had considerable experience of this kind; once he spent a night in a dungeon at Philippi, for two years he remained a prisoner at Cæsarea, and now we see him held under guard in the imperial city. There were in those days rash disciples who displayed too much eagerness for martyrdom. In many cases these were weak disciples whose enthusiasm flared up into a passing flame instead of burning with a steady glow. Strength may show itself even more in patient waiting than in reckless

fighting. Paul was brave enough to retreat when that was best and wisest. He had no morbid desire for notoriety and could find sufficient suffering without seeking it. To a man of his energetic temperament imprisonment was hard to bear, it was not easy for him to be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," but God gave him power to see beyond the present affliction.

He had long desired to visit the capital of the world for the sake of bearing his testimony. He was a great general, he had an eye for strategic points, he did not despise small places, but he was eager to send the influence of the gospel out into the large currents of the world's life. In a strange way his desire was fulfilled; Roman soldiers brought the great preacher to Rome as a prisoner. The great conquerors entered Rome in triumph, acclaimed by the fickle crowd and with broken-hearted kings and wretched slaves in their train as visible proofs of their power; Paul came as an obscure captive, weary and travel-stained but he has proved to be a greater force in the world's highest life than any conquering Cæsar. The documents he sent from his prison have had more permanent power than the edicts of the emperor. The power of the living voice is great, and none valued it more than Paul, but the literature born of inspiring love and pure loyalty is a lasting power for good. The situation is strongly presented in the following passage. "History has few stranger contrasts than when it shows us Paul preaching Christ under the wall of Nero's palace. Thenceforward there were but two religions in

the Roman world; the worship of the Emperor and the worship of the Saviour. The old superstitions had been long worn out; they had lost all hold on educated minds. There remained to civilised heathens no other worship possible but the worship of power; and the incarnation of power which they chose was, very naturally, the Sovereign of the world. This, then, was the ultimate result of the noble intuitions of Plato, the methodical reasonings of Aristotle, the pure morality of Socrates. All had failed for want of external sanction and authority. The residuum they left was the philosophy of Epicurus and the religion of Nerolatry. But a new doctrine was already taught in the forum, and believed even on the Palatine. Over against altars of Nero and Poppea, the voice of a prisoner was daily heard, and daily woke in grovelling souls the consciousness of their divine destiny. Men listened and knew that self-sacrifice was better than ease, humiliation more exalted than pride, to suffer nobler than to reign. They felt that the only religion which satisfied the needs of man was the religion of sorrow, the religion of self-devotion, the religion of the cross."

PAUL'S SELF-FORGETFULNESS

It is easy to seem to be modest by hiding oneself behind general terms; Paul does not adopt this course, he is both particular and personal. He uses the pronoun "I" freely, he talks about himself; and yet we feel that in the deepest sense he is forgetting himself. He discusses his imprison-

ment not from the point of view of his personal likes or dislikes but simply and solely in its relation to the life of his fellowmen and the spread of the gospel. In this spirit and from this standpoint he discusses the question of "Circumstance and Providence." He can look back and say, "Thou hast led me by a way that I knew not of."

The Jews having failed to stop his work by means of the assassin's dagger rejoiced to think that his imprisonment would check his career. The disciples mourned that such a mighty soldier should be withdrawn from the field of battle. Paul himself chafed under restraint and feared that his usefulness might be crippled. Now he is able to view it in a full clear light and see some measure of its meaning. Again the divine wisdom and love are vindicated; life's "happenings" are seen to be controlled by the mighty hand of God. The gracious influence went out from this great personality in ever-widening circles. The soldiers who took turns in guarding this strange prisoner were rough men used to scenes of vice and bloodshed but they could recognize a good man when they came in contact with him. They learned that this man had not committed any crime and that he was held in prison on account of his religious beliefs. They heard him speak, sing, and pray, they saw how gentle he was in his intercourse with the disciples, they felt that there was a strong power in the story of the crucified Nazarene. Some of these soldiers suffered for the faith thus kindled in them, others carried it into

remote parts of the world. It needs a great man to make an influential martyr, and Paul stood that test; the more those nearest to him examined the character of his sufferings and his manner of bearing it, the more did the beauty of his life shine out.

On Christians of different shades the effect of this imprisonment was various; friendly disciples were made bold to give a clearer stronger testimony; the Judaizing opponents of Paul were also stimulated to greater activity, and they no doubt expected to gain an advantage for their narrow peculiar views. Paul calmly fixes his eye on the result as a whole, and rejoices that in so many ways the gospel is made known.

PAUL'S CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL

The state of things thus revealed in the church at Rome is not satisfactory, but Paul does not seek to hide anything. He has no desire to spread slander or to increase scandal, but he knows that real bravery consists in facing the actual facts of any situation. He was no doubt influenced by personal feeling, what man is not? But he is not the kind of man to regard the phrases "my friends" "my enemies" as containing an exhaustive classification of the world. The supreme emphasis is laid upon the fact that this activity, varied as it was, had helped forward the spread of the gospel. He has the robust faith that can look the unpleasant facts in the face and rejoice that the truth is not a feeble thing to be discredited

by the strife of faction or destroyed by the power of persecution. "What care I for parties and personalities? I desire to care supremely for the truth. I rejoice that Christ is preached in many ways and that my sufferings have stimulated such preaching. The people who wish to irritate me I try to forget and I pray that out of their preaching good may come." Here we have the breadth and boldness of a living faith.

There is implied also a tender thought of God. Paul says even through the dust and din of controversy God will lead His truth to victory and He will take care of me. This shall bring blessing to me through the deepening of my life. This heroic man who more than others of his time possessed the power to stand alone finds consolation in God's care and the prayers of God's people. Paul knew that by this golden chain of prayer he was bound securely to the throne of God. Hence he can cherish the confidence that the cause will prosper and that he himself will not be defeated and put to shame. He has to face the two common enemies, life and death, and he is confident that by God's grace he will conquer both. To the thoughtful man death is the weaker foe. It is a tragic thing for a man who has some touch of nobility to live too long, to outlive his usefulness, to mar a glorious past. Paul was not afraid to live, but he was afraid to be left alone with life's battles and temptations lest he should become a castaway. He looks into the face of the dreadful possibility and then learns once more that the will

of God is best and the presence of Christ sufficient. He will go back hopefully to the cares and uncertainties of life confident that the gospel meets all needs, it fits for life or death, it checks presumption, banishes cowardly fear, and brings into the heart God's perfect peace.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

CHAPTER VIII

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

(I, 21-26)

These words do not express a cool speculation or a nicely balanced preference but are rather the outcome of clear vision and strong emotion. The writer has just expressed the confidence that the grace given in answer to prayer, will so stimulate and support him that, in any case, he will continue to manifest his loyalty to Jesus Christ. Now he solemnly looks both life and death in the face. The broken clause bears witness to the intensity of thought and depth of feeling, but the drift of the passage is quite clear and shows us a man who was strongly appealed to by the rival attractions of life and death, and not prepared to make a definite statement of personal choice.

Some may say, why discuss at all a matter which is not in one's own power to settle? A question which forgets that the human spirit does not easily recognize any narrow, definite limits within which it may pursue its activities. The way in which a strong man carries himself in the great hours of his life is a highly interesting revelation. The Christian religion does not cramp thought and shut up the passionate working of the spirit behind the strong barriers of a fixed

fate. Paul knew that his future was in the hands of God, and with all modesty he would have repeated to Nero the words of his Lord to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all except it were given from above." Hence he did not see that it was wrong to look out into the future with wistful eyes, and express in a submissive spirit his own uncertain feelings. It is good that the Heavenly Father keeps to himself power of the future and knowledge concerning it. Each man must learn for himself the wisdom and kindness of this arrangement, but the way to learn it is through the free, full play of his own thoughts.

The question, is it better to die or to live? cannot be answered in a general fashion; and even when it is associated with a particular person it is not a matter of direct decision. At most, we can simply learn what is the spirit in which a loyal, Christian disciple will face such a question. Paul gives a statement of the case, but not a settlement of the question.

It is sometimes charged against the Christian religion that it leads men to take a false view of life, and a selfish view of death. It kindles an ecstatic rapture which makes men discontented with the prosaic realities of life and leads them to long for a luxurious, sensuous heaven. This contention, in so far as it has any truth, simply shows the unfairness of judging any religion or system of thought by the onesided representation of its feeblest followers. Enthusiastic martyrs have welcomed death so eagerly, that their enemies have been led to regard their religion as a fatal

fanaticism, which kindled in their minds a blind hatred of life. Even the great teachers have been inclined to insist too much on the power "to die well," as the main proof of the inspiration and solace that comes from religion. Without such fearless enthusiasm, without the high consciousness that even life may be purchased too dearly, great movements could never have fought their way in the face of fierce bigotry and cruel persecution; but on the other hand it is well to be reminded that in rapturous exalted moods there is as much danger of a narrow selfishness as in any other form of life. Paul's balanced statement, his lack of prompt decision and definite choice, gives us a noble vision of life and a sublime thought of death; from this point of view, life is a sacred trust, and death a great deliverance.

THE CHRISTIAN'S JUDGMENT OF LIFE

A man's judgment of life depends upon the principle from which he lives. "For me to live is Christ." Christ is the source of inspiration, or in other words, of the power to plan and work which comes from the possession of truth and love. To the believing man, who has a real relationship with Christ, life is a process, a constant movement made hopeful by this possibility of growing in the knowledge of Christ, and of transforming that knowledge into fruitful service. Paul felt that his life was small and poor compared with the rich full-orbed life of Jesus, but he gloried in the fact that a life the same in kind as that which redeemed the world had been im-

parted to him. He could bear the cross as well as glory in it; he could rejoice in Christ as the beginning and end of his life; and because the spirit of the Christ was in him, he knew that the struggle after Christlikeness was not in vain. Life, character, service, all that these simple strong words represent comes to him through his loyalty to Jesus. Life is thus looked at from within, and not judged or described from its mere circumstances or drapery. What it is in its real nature, in relation to the man himself, and in relation to his fellowmen is the chief point of consideration. It is an experience of communion with Christ, knowledge of His character, and sympathy with His purposes. It is a process of growth in the attainments and achievements that spring from this spiritual fellowship. It is an opportunity for service, a day for fruitful toil. Thus, life has meaning, aim, and hope. Because the cross of Christ does not mean defeat but conquest through humiliation. The life of the disciple is a process, which is ever turning defeat into victory. Life may be a wearisome labour, a hard battle, but it cannot in this view be a complete blank, or a bitter disappointment; nor can it ever be said of it, that all is "Vanity and vexation of spirit." A religion that cannot redeem life will never really glorify death.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF DEATH

Paul does not say, "Death is loss, we lose this warm, cheerful life with all its beauty and music, and pass into the dark unknown." There was for

him something behind and beyond death, possessing real power and positive attractiveness; hence he could say, "To die is gain." That is an utterance of faith, reached, not by reasoning from a creed, but by seeing the real outcome of God-given life. This life of union and fellowship with Christ is a power that death cannot destroy. If it is possible to live in the presence of Christ now, and work under His inspiration, then, behind the veil, there is the same possibility in a richer form. There is no attempt at an elaborate description of that other life; the life beyond as well as the life here is viewed in its essential spirit, not in its circumstances. Here, as elsewhere, he reminds us, that we see through a glass darkly, and prophesy in part. But even in the dim light of the present the man who is really united to Christ can assert his deep intelligent conviction, that neither life nor death can separate the loyal soul from the love of God. Life is communion and service; death is rest and freedom; how then shall we rightly stand between the two?

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION

It is possible now to see how a strong man could feel a strong appeal from both sides. Life has its natural attraction; the instinct of self-preservation is a strong God-given feeling. Life has its claims; our friends and our work hold us fast. Death also has its attractions, for it means rest from toil, freedom from pain, deliverance from persecution. It means that our work, in so far as it is God's work, shall be lifted away from

failure and misinterpretation, into a larger, more satisfying light. Life has its call to duty, and death its call to blessedness.

The common view is that Paul states that he does not know what to choose on the whole. It seems more likely that he declines to make a definite personal choice (see R. V. margin). We can see quite clearly what he would choose if he were deciding the question from his personal point of view. He was a tried worker, a veteran soldier; we do not expect him to hear the authoritative words spoken to the youthful Peter "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow afterwards" (John XIII, 36). He might well wish "to cross the bar," and see his Pilot face to face, or to break up the camp, and go and meet the Captain of his salvation. From the standpoint of his own blessed satisfaction, this was more desirable and advantageous. He does not say "I am nothing, I have no views, no desires, Christ has crushed them." If he does not make a choice, he gives a full frank revelation of all that was in his heart, in the hours when death seemed a prize to be longed for.

But a man who does not live unto himself cannot look at death as a mere personal convenience. He knows that there is still work for him to do, and he is confident that he will be spared to do it. The conviction that the faithful man is not called until his task is done has sustained the noblest men in their trying hours. A kindly providence, not cold fate guides the Church of God. The true representative of the Christian faith shows

neither a proud defiant stoicism nor a fanatical zeal for the martyr's crown. That a man's career is in the hands of God, and that it means something for others; these two thoughts give steadiness to the soul in the hour of highest rapture. Whether the expectations are fulfilled in the exact form is unimportant; the principle that gives vitality is true and everlasting. On this principle the reverent man who looks calmly into the face of both life and death is able to state frankly his own thoughts and, at the same time, leave the uncertain future in the care of the Father.

A TIMELY EXHORTATION

CHAPTER IX

A TIMELY EXHORTATION

(I 27-30)

FELLOWSHIP IN SUFFERING

This strong word is sent from a man who had been called to suffer in many ways for his faith, that it may be the means of strengthening those who were face to face with fierce and continual opposition. Paul's conflict at Philippi they saw, when he first preached the gospel there; the nature of his present suffering they can learn from his messenger; from these two periods of his ministry they see clearly that his faithfulness to Jesus had involved him in a life-long struggle. He, however, does not claim a unique, isolated position; as disciples, in proportion to their energy and faithfulness, they also had endured the same conflict or agony. Though different in position and ability, the humblest disciple can, in a measure, understand the life of apostleship and martyrdom. The glory of the Christian faith is that it is not merely an intellectual dogma for learned men, or a sacramental mystery, a monopoly for priests, but a common life to be shared by the whole body of the faithful; and it is through this life that the revelation of God is brought to bear upon the world. The Christian religion claims to

have the highest revelation in the gentle lowly form; this revelation linked itself to all that was noblest in the past, and since its manifestation it has continued to work through the lives of men. Paul puts his life into his preaching in a most delicate, useful way. He does not boast of high achievement, he does not expose his inner life in any morbid fashion, but so much of his personal life, as shall bring him into close contact with his fellow disciples, he allows to colour his teaching. Similar treatment he desires from them; let them gain all possible help from him, from the power of his presence, from his kindly messages, from the thought of unceasing interest and prayerful sympathy; but let them never forget that they have a life of their own, which must vindicate itself in the face of a hostile world. The more they were enthusiastic and receptive in his presence the more will he be disappointed if they fail to prove the reality and independence of their own life. Men can only have the noblest fellowship in faith and suffering who have an individual life and an original experience.

STAND FIRM AND STAND TOGETHER

Though it is true that we give the highest honour to our teachers when we learn to walk alone and apply their principles in our own way, yet it is a worthy motive and a helpful stimulus to remember their personal interest in us and their hope concerning us. Whether Paul can visit these disciples or is compelled to remain absent, his highest satisfaction will be in this, that they

act as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, that they show themselves consistent members of the new Christian commonwealth. (III. 20). This word "behave as citizens" corrects a narrow individualism, and suggests the true nature of that religious life which finds its real development not merely in lonely discipline but also in social communion. The standing fast does not refer simply to firmness of personal character; it involves loyalty to the brotherhood. To guard one's own life is important, but to defend the Church is also a sacred duty. This is always true, but the truth was very clear and vivid, when the Church, as the embodiment of Christ's kingdom, was fighting to gain a foothold in this alien world. To-day it may be the duty of Christian men to purify politics and ennoble citizenship and bring the whole social life of their town and country as near as possible to the Christian ideal — a high and difficult task. That was not, however, precisely the problem that Paul and his followers had to face. The first need was rather to create a community of men and women who were united by faith in one God and loyalty to a common Saviour. This called for two forms of activity, a consistent working out of the personal faith, and a loyal co-operation with men of "like precious faith."

Unity is a great need of the Christian Church, A united Church would certainly be an impressive sight; and if it possessed intelligence and sympathy as well as numbers and wealth, it might face very hopefully the great problems of modern

social life. Unity, however, does not mean uniformity; indeed human nature being what it is, we may safely say that uniformity never has been attained and never will be, because it never ought to be. In the early Church men did not think and believe alike on every question any more than they do now. The tendencies from which various sects and parties now spring were then in existence. But there was a mighty enthusiasm which inspired a strong feeling of brotherhood; and there was fierce persecution which forced the soldiers of the cross to stand close together. We would gladly have the enthusiasm without the persecution, but fervour of feeling is harder to maintain in the face of subtle scepticism and fashionable worldliness than in the presence of violent opposition.

Active co-operation there must be in the cause of truth and righteousness, "striving together for the faith of the Gospel." This is not so much formulating the creed for a defence against erroneous opinion as manifesting the faith in its saving force, a force that appeals to a man's whole nature, illuminating the mind as well as quickening the heart. If we turn the church into a luxurious club or a restless debating society it becomes spiritually impotent. Real intellectual problems must be faced courageously, when they do arise, but one of the best defences against a shallow scepticism is found in practical service. The best apology for the faith that the Gospel inspires, and the way of life that it demands is to live that life in an energetic, consistent fashion. The true

life of an individual is a light which shows to the perplexed the path of peace and progress. The harmonious life of a living society, moving in the same spiritual atmosphere and manifesting in varied forms the same convictions, is a testimony that the world cannot ignore.

THE TRIUMPHANT TONE

The great general cheers his soldiers in the face of the greatest difficulties; when the outlook is darkest he makes them feel that they have a noble cause and a capable leader; listening to his inspiring confident words, they are ready for all that men may do or dare. In a similar spirit Paul fronts the world, and calls upon his comrades to be of good cheer. The great battles are fought not by the sword but by the spirit that moves behind the sword. Convictions and sentiments win the splendid victories. These men were called to face and conquer the world by the power of God-given truth; and although the truth had not yet been wrought into a system of theology or polished into a creed, the vision of it led men on to victory. If men go out into the arena with empty heart and empty hands they will fall victims to fussy activity or cowardly fear, but when nerved by the living faith inspired by the Son of God, they are not easily affrighted. They are not disheartened either by boisterous opposition or malicious persecution. Their enemies fight against them in vain when God is on their side. They are not perfect, they have not yet fully grasped the meaning of their own faith, they have not con-

quered all their weakness, but there is a principle of life in them that the world cannot subdue. Such, in triumphant tone, is the view which the apostle presents for their cheer and comfort. This faith was amply justified, this prophetic insight anticipated the course of history. Neither by brutal violence nor subtle allurements could the pagan world conquer the mysterious power of the cross. Those who sought to crush the new faith by coarse ridicule or by bitter persecution only proved the weakness of their cause and the wastefulness of their efforts. The wild blustering forces of the world proved to be weak and vain. Surely in such a time the Church was in danger! No, the church was in less danger then, than in later days, when the world was conquered, and the conflict, though less brutal, became more subtle and severe. The roar of the angry mob and sword of persecution, are not the greatest enemies of a righteous cause. Paul looks them calmly in the face and says such opposition is "for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God."

THE GIFT OF SUFFERING

This brings us to a strange view of suffering, which regards it as a God-given privilege; "because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer in His behalf." This suffering with and for Christ is a gracious gift of God through which salvation reaches its completion, even as the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through

suffering. To believe, in any real sense, is a gracious endowment, but faith, when it has the power to accept the shame of suffering and turn it into strength and glory, reaches a higher stage. To believe in Christ is an absolute need; to suffer for Him is an honour. We are not called to seek or make the suffering; it will be sent, "granted" when we are fit for it, and can use it rightly. It will come to us in the appropriate way, if with full faith we choose the service of the King.

Is there diadem, as monarch,
That His brow adorns?
"Yea, a crown, in very surety,
But of thorns."

It is said that men envied Simon the Cyrenian who had literally the privilege of sharing the cross of Jesus. It was foolish envy. To each one, such cross as he can nobly carry will be appointed and apportioned. In plain prosaic forms or in striking dramatic situations the cross will stand revealed to those who have walked in the light of His life.

Since such suffering is a high form of fellowship with Christ it must be borne in the spirit of patience and hope that he manifested (1 Peter II, 22.) This discipline links us to all the saints and martyrs who have gone before. As we have said, Paul did not claim to be a brilliant exception; he distinctly stated that the Philippian converts had to endure "the same conflict." And in the hour of conflict, no doubt, they drew sweet consolation from the thought that the sorrowful way was a well-trodden path, that all those whom they

loved and revered had travelled the same path of duty. There is no need, then, to go out of our way in search for pain, but if it should come in the form of disappointment, misinterpretation or persecution, it will take the sting out of it, to accept it as a higher form of service, a special gift from the hand of the eternal Father who knows the need and the capability of each soul.

THE MIND THAT WAS IN CHRIST

CHAPTER X

THE MIND THAT WAS IN CHRIST

(II, 1-5)

Though we have here a flood of tender sentiment we cannot regard the writer as a weak emotional man, or a preacher given to the utterance of shallow raptures. Paul is too well known for us to make that mistake; we have felt the force of his mighty arguments and passionate appeals, we know that he is strong-minded and that he despises empty cant. It is quite safe to stake his intellectual reputation upon these letters which have lived for almost nineteen centuries, and which seem to be just coming into their full heritage of power. There is constant danger from the "falsehood of extremes." The man who is emotional in temperament and who loves religious excitement is in danger of cultivating that side of his nature to the neglect of clear earnest thought. The man who delights in intellectual activity and demands a logical presentation of truth may just as easily undervalue emotion. But the full view of truth is not given to either side of our nature, but to the complete and harmonious working of all our powers. Paul's great strength is seen in the fact that his varied powers are so well balanced. Such a strong thinker and

active worker may safely yield to tender sentiment without danger of unreality. He had no tears for fancied evils, but he was often moved to deep sorrow by the sight of sin and wretchedness.

"If" is a small word but it has been well said there is much virtue in it, it can suggest doubt, insinuate suspicion, contrive excuse. It may even make a strong assertion, here it tells us that comfort in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the spirit, tender mercies and compassion are of the essence of the Christian religion. The form of the statement throws us not upon the authority of the teacher but upon the reality of our own experience. The apostle is not a cynic who doubts the reality of love and sympathy. His own disciples knew how splendidly he had set forth the sympathy of Jesus, how nobly he had lived it, and how wonderfully the same spirit had been kindled in them. Hence they are exhorted by all that is most real in their own lives to seek peace and mutual happiness.

Paul's arguments have always a practical application; in his writings, "therefore" is not the close of a theoretical demonstration; it turns the particular train of thought in the direction of present duty. The glory of the Cross, the power of the preacher's own faith, the responsive experience of believing men all strengthen the call to mutual love and loyalty. In this way the problem is faced which is always present in some form, namely, how to reconcile the conflicting claims of the undivided soul and of the society into which our common faith leads us. Paul's teaching laid

great stress on personal thought and individual life, and such teaching, essential as it is to the highest forms of life, has its dangers, especially, when under the influence of great enthusiasm it leads men to break away from the trammels of tradition. Some have exalted the individual life in such a way as to destroy the unity of the Church and prove its infinite divisibility. While rejoicing in the name of "brother" they have lost hold of the brotherhood. The other extreme is not more satisfactory, there is loss all round when the individual is crushed by the community. In the older times men thought more of the Church and the State than of the individual soul. A man was regarded not as a soul to be saved but as a member of society to be drilled and disciplined. Amos and Isaiah quickened the life of their time by making clear the great truth that God speaks directly to the spirit of the believing man. In the teaching of Paul the same truth appears in bold yet reverent forms. But the man who lays such stress on individual conscience will also emphasize the need of harmonious co-operation, and the beauty of social service.

A lonely life may be simpler, but it is also poorer; the problem of living is shirked, not solved. To submit to a dictator may save thought but it is a lower form of life. Paul does not desire either a despotism or a state of anarchy but a living society in which we are really "members one of another." It is not possible for the Christian Church to be always and everywhere the same in all the details of its life, but we may hold fast to

the central truth and cherish the one essential spirit of Christian love. This passage suggests how men may live together on the basis of a common faith, being true to themselves and kind to each other. It rejects the cynical creed that there is no such thing as love or pity, that every man has his price and that the highest success is simply the victory of the meanest and strongest. It is still true that "man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn," but it is also true that wherever Jesus Christ is intelligently and lovingly worshipped the life of man is softened and brightened. Those who in Christian lands crush and oppress their fellow men are more to be condemned than the ancient pagans, because they are deaf to the loving appeal that comes from the Cross. Because the Church is a company of men and women who are struggling and growing, there must be in it this atmosphere of pity and helpfulness. If all were pure and wise and strong, forbearance and kindness would not be so often called for; as things are, this spirit of Christ meets our deepest need. Hence Paul can make the powerful appeal: "for Christ's sake and my sake be ye kind one towards another."

Out of such love real unity of life springs and this is quite consistent with healthful variety of thought and conduct. The unity of home life is not simply living in the same house and bearing the same name; it means having the same interests, cherishing the same aims and hopes. The unity of the Church is not uniformity of worship or absolute sameness of creed, but rather the inspira-

tion of love, a threefold love towards the Redeemer, the fellow-disciples and those who are still in darkness. Such love leads to that faithful energetic service that is the best safe-guard against vain quibbling and useless quarreling.

This is the only power that can conquer self-conceit and party spirit. These two evils create contention and cause division, they spring from temptations which beset men who have conquered vulgar vices and are ambitious for usefulness. To feel that we are called to play a noble part and help forward a great work may beget a sense of our own importance. To feel that we have the gift for service and capability for leadership may lead us to encourage faction. These feelings may be God-given and therefore trustworthy, but we must lift them into the light of the Cross that they may be purified and chastened. Surely Christ is crucified afresh and in a most shameful manner when the congregation is split into parties and the strength given for service is wasted in strife.

Our Lord did not please Himself, and if we are really to follow Him we must learn to look with kindly interest on the things of others. We must not be locked up in a little world of our own things. If we grasp all for self, we who have the Crown in sight may lose all. Paul, because he entered so fully into the lives of others, stands before us as a man who is rich in nature, noble in spirit, independent in judgment, strong in character. He traces all his power back to its original source in the love of Christ. He who now reigns in heaven became poor that we might be rich.

The love that was scorned and defeated is now seen to be victorious. It kindles a flame of enthusiasm and self-sacrificing loyalty in the hearts of faithful followers, and nineteen centuries have not exhausted its virtue. He who was the Son of God and the Son of Man shall, by the spiritual virtue that streams from the Cross bring many sons to glory.

THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTA-
TION OF THE CHRIST

CHAPTER XI

THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF THE CHRIST

(II, 6-11)

This is one of the noblest passages in the writings of Paul. It is interesting and important, in the highest degree, from the point of view of theology, and it no doubt played a great part in the development of the central doctrine of the Christian faith concerning the nature of God. This noble statement, however, does not come in here as part of a formal system of doctrine, but rather to supply a mighty motive for the exhortation which urges upon faithful men the need of possessing the mind of Christ. The earnest appeal for unselfish thought and tender sympathy expands naturally and gracefully into a sublime description of the life and destiny of the Christ. It is Paul's version of our Lord's own words. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The precise shade of meaning to be attached to particular words may be difficult to decide, but the purpose of the passage is quite clear. Paul is not so much speculating upon the mysteries of the divine nature as dwelling upon the wonderful possibilities of true Christian life. To him Jesus was the Lord from

heaven "who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." But it seems quite fair to say that the character rather than the nature of Christ is the thought that is now uppermost in the mind of the apostle. The divine life comes down to earth, appears in lowly human form, passes through defeat to victory, that is, through sorrowful service to triumphant blessedness. Faith in and communion with this life is the source of our inspiration and the secret of our strength. The very purpose of its manifestation was that it might become an ever present reality in the lives of men, who steadily face the facts and patiently bear the burdens of life. The life of the Christ has, on this view, a threefold aspect; it is a revelation of the inner nature and real character of God, the means of our redemption, the example and inspiration of our life. We cannot fathom all the mysterious meaning of this great truth but it is needful to meditate on such high themes if we would "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." To understand what Jesus has done for us, we must have some worthy conception of what He is in Himself and of the spirit that finds the highest expression in His life.

The humiliation of the Christ was voluntary, a spontaneous act of love revealing the deepest principle of the life of God. He who possessed the highest rank did not regard it as a prize to be kept for personal enjoyment but rather as a power for service. In earlier days men had thought of God as possessing kingly majesty and even fatherly

pity, but now self-sacrificing love is seen to be divine. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself. Then he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John XIII, 3-5). The union of the highest life with lowliest service was the fact which impressed the intelligent disciple creating reverent worship and enthusiastic loyalty. He who existed in the eternal world in a state of equality with God, did not cling tenaciously to that condition of being, but voluntarily laid it aside to assume the form of a bondservant, and in the likeness of man to pursue the path of obedience, even when it led to the shameful death of the cross. This was to Paul a living creed and for his hearers it brought new meaning and hope unto life. By the touch of this truth sorrow, slavery, and shame lost their bitter sting. It was felt that God was no longer afar off. He had entered into the very heart of human life. The Lord of life and glory had appeared among men as a servant. Service thus becomes glorious, and manhood is recognised as the appropriate means for the manifestation of divine life. This life Paul had received through faith as a quickening power, and his sympathetic eye could see it working to create a new society, a noble church in which communion with God and fellowship with man was to find its highest expression. To

fathom the depths of the divine nature is impossible, to explain fully the theology that lies behind this great passage is a difficult and delicate matter; but it is of the very essence of faith to grasp the fact that the life of God has come forth from heaven to show us the meaning of our own struggle and to give us power for the conquest of sin. Because Jesus was divine He was the highest type of manhood, and hence in His case the struggle of life assumes its severest form. He seemed to be simply as other men; the very perfection of His manhood veiled most effectively His divinity from the common gaze. The story of His life seems to be an ordinary chapter in the record of the long conflict between light and darkness. We note the patient labour, the fearless testimony; the wonderful teaching; and then we see the world's reward for all this, suspicion growing into malice, bigoted opposition persistently crying "Crucify him." Have we not seen all this before, is it not the world's common way with uncommon men? Alas! this story of the suffering servant is in one sense too common, often has it made us feel the confusion of life and doubt the reality of God's care. If, however, we see the true meaning of this shameful cross instead of deepening our despair, it will beget in us a nobler hope. In it we see the willing obedience of the Son of God to the highest law of life. He has emptied Himself to prove to an unbelieving world the power of real human goodness.

Out of this deep humiliation He rises to sublime glory and wields the noblest spiritual influence.

HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION 111

"He for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." But the glory is not for Himself any more than the suffering. He is the first-born of a new creation and shall bring many sons to glory. He has linked His destiny with ours, and our faith claims fellowship with Him through all the spheres.

There is given to Him a great name, a name that corresponds to His nature, and gathers round itself all sweet, sacred associations human and divine. The lowly name Jesus shall become the symbol of noblest power, of forgiveness and friendliness, of sympathy and service, of purity and strength. This is a name to inspire and unite men in deepest fellowship. When it is intelligently and lovingly exalted small differences drop into their rightful place and the essential aspects of truth receive due emphasis, when men gather in devout homage round His cross, harsh controversies are stilled and hard barriers fall away.

To Him there shall be given an everlasting universal worship. In heaven and on earth the true glory of His life shall be recognised. Even this is not for Himself. He laid down His life that He might take it again, and as He receives it back in the devout homage of loyal souls, it becomes the means of uplifting those souls from the dust of earth into the pure air of heaven. The worship of the true God, the God of nature and history, here assumes its most tender helpful form. We see that goodness is crowned and mercy vindicated. He who gave Himself completely for

the service of His brethren has found the only glory that is worth possessing and He stands the fiery ordeal of death and judgment. In the life of God that great word has its highest meaning, "He that loseth His life shall find it." Paul's great thought is that Jesus who pleased not Himself, has found His life in realms of glory and is now seeking it again in the lives of men and women at Philippi who are called to look not simply at their own needs and cares but each one on the things of others, so as to find personal salvation through social service.

THE IDEAL AND THE ENERGY OF
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER XII

THE IDEAL AND THE ENERGY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(II 12, 13)

TRUTH AND LIFE

Having shown that the life of the Christ, in time and eternity, is a manifestation of the self-sacrifice of God for the redemption of men and having declared that, in all realms of life, the divinity of this sacrifice shall be acknowledged and adored, Paul in his usual manner brings the most magnificent passage in this letter to bear upon the present life of the Christian community. It is at such points that we see clearly the fact that the apostle is writing more as a preacher than as a theologian. As Jesus stooped from the highest place to be the servant of all, so Christian truth must come from its loftiest heights to minister to the lowly life. Paul was a keen thinker, and as competent as most men to investigate the truth in its varied relations. Let us be thankful for men, who, in a reverent spirit, grapple with the hardest questions, but let us also be thankful that we can nourish our souls on the great truths that cluster around the life of Christ without waiting for the full and final settlement of such questions. Paul did not lack interest in the intellectual

side of the truth, but as the preacher of a new faith, his chief concern was to win loyal and consistent converts. The living in union with the Christ is valued more than the correct theory concerning the person of Christ. His love for the Christ and his care for the converts move toward the same end, the building up of a community, in which men shall enjoy in their own hearts, and manifest toward each other, this new sense of strength and fellowship. "Beloved" expresses real affection satisfaction and hope; it shows the teacher's yearning sympathy over men whom he expects to "live as sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

THE TACT OF A TRUE TEACHER

When we have made all allowance for expansiveness and richness of expression, we recognise in Paul's commendations the sympathetic tact of a man who possessed in the highest degree the teaching gift. Even where he is compelled to reprove, he begins by saying all he can to cheer and encourage men engaged in a severe struggle. The battle of life is hard enough without needless bitterness on the part of the teacher. The man who loves his subject and has a keen sense of its majestic power will have sympathy with those whose vision is dim and whose will is still weak. In the case of the Philippians, Paul had found a genuine interest, a quick responsiveness, a ready obedience to the word of God. This he acknowledges in appealing for a fuller acceptance and appropriation of the truth. The power of his

personality was great, and his presence or absence did make a great difference; under the shelter of his presence many souls found that faith was easier and worship more joyful. This must always be the case; the strong man with clear thought and impetuous emotion must have a powerful legitimate influence. But the man who cherishes the true Christian ideal is anxious to avoid the danger of having men clinging to him, and depending on him, in a way that will hinder their own life. He says, "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand." (Cor. I, 24.) That is, "You stand by your own faith, not by mine." The very nature of the religion that the apostle had taught, as well as loyalty to himself as their friend and helper, demanded from these disciples the attempt to understand more fully and live more consistently the great Christian principles. He would gladly have been present with them to impart unto them some spiritual gift. To long for meeting and fellowship on both sides was quite natural, but when once men have received the vision of Christ and an intelligent conception of the meaning of the Christian faith their growth is not dependent upon the actual presence of any priest or preacher.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Since he has had proof of their response to the preaching of the gospel he can exhort them to carry forward the work begun, that is, to be true to the inner God-given life, and work together in harmony for the strengthening of the Christian

community. If Paul is absent God is present with them, working in and through them for His good pleasure. This does not mean that teachers can be dispensed with, or that there should be any unnatural striving after independence and originality. We grow to independence and individuality most effectively by mutual helpfulness in thought and conduct. But Paul's eager longing for all his converts was that they might grow towards Christian manhood; it was a great sorrow to him if they lingered in the realm of childhood. For a man to continue to be "carnal," to remain "a babe in Christ," was a severe disappointment to a teacher whose whole aim was to quicken personal thoughtfulness and individual consciousness (Cor., III.). The high ideal is possible because the divine energy is working in the community and in each individual member of it. To introduce a slightly different form of legalism and priestly guidance could not be any satisfaction to the man who could say that he was sent not to baptize but to preach the gospel, and that he desired to commend himself to every one's conscience in the sight of God. To the disciples of our Lord it seemed a hopeless situation, when the Master who had taught them with such patient persistence was taken away from them; but they showed that they had not been with Jesus in vain, and that though, in one sense, He was absent, His divine energy continued to work, and to work through them. The privilege and prerogative of the individual soul and of the Christian community rests upon this spiritual basis; the divine

life is not confined to ancient saints, or present rulers; it is a creative, consecrated energy working in every faithful soul, and manifested in every place where there is a loyal effort to realise the communion of saints.

THE SAVING ENERGY IN THE
BELIEVER AND THE CHURCH

CHAPTER XIII

THE SAVING ENERGY IN THE BELIEVER AND THE CHURCH

(I, 6; II, 12, 13)

These two passages are generally placed side by side, as statements which illustrate and complete each other. Paul has confidence that the Christian life will reach its proper destiny, and attain to full maturity, because it is a work that God has begun. And he can call upon the disciples at Philippi to carry out their salvation, with conscientious care, because there is a divine energy moving within their souls, and throughout the Church. The meditation on I, 6, is conceived and worked out from the purely personal point of view; and it may be questioned whether it does full justice to Paul's position, since it is possible to maintain that the carrying on of the work until the day of Christ may include the keeping alive of the congregation until the appearance of Christ. Further, it may be contended that the exclusive application of these texts to the inner processes of individual sanctification is a divergence from their original meaning. It is not possible or suitable to attempt a consideration of all the questions thus raised, as it would require a treatise on history and theology rather than a brief practical meditation. But it is

quite possible, and altogether appropriate, to show that what we call the social side of salvation was in some way included in the preaching of the apostle Paul. If we are asked whether it meant that God is at work "in" the personal life of the disciples or "among" the individual members who constituted that new society called "the Church," the answer to such a question must surely be that both elements are included and stand in close relationship to each other. We can count upon it that in the teaching of Paul these two aspects of truth never stand far apart. To him the solitary burden and the social service are two sides of the same life. (Gal. VI, 2. 6.) The epistle in which we find the clearest vindication of the rights of the individual conscience also contains the most beautiful presentation of the truth that we are members of one another. (I Cor.) To preserve these two sides of the truth in proper proportions, and each in its own place, is important for right living as well as for correct thinking. At one time the average Christian was in danger of regarding "the salvation of the soul" as a purely personal matter, its realm being the world of the individual mind and heart, and its aim the qualifications and the passport for a distant heaven. That view when it was narrow and extreme, was itself the result of a previous extreme position which had sacrificed the inward life to outward ceremonial and convention. Now we are in danger of laying so much stress on the social side of life, that we may forget that we have "a soul," and a world, which belongs to ourselves and our God. These

two sides of our life imply each other; the deepest individual experience and the highest social communion must minister the one to the other. Since Paul's day they have sometimes been rent asunder and made the subject of abrupt contrasts and violent oppositions. Out of these artificial contradictions fierce conflicts have arisen. We have now to seek a deeper union and fuller harmony. Not in exactly the same way, but certainly in the spirit of this great teacher we may learn to reconcile the claims of the soul and the demands of society.

Paul inherited the results of that great movement recorded in the Old Testament which advanced from the call for social righteousness to the culture of a deep personal life. In the later prophets the problem of the individual life became sharp and painful. Man is seen to be more than a member of a community; each soul has a personal relationship to God. Paul was ever seeking to understand and apply the teaching of Jesus; and we must surely recognise the fact that in the revelation that comes to us through the Son of God, the meaning and worth of the individual man receives new emphasis. Paul tells the story of his own inward conflict ending in personal appropriation of Christ and reconciliation to God through him. The growth of the Christian Church was by means of the conversion of the individual men who might belong to any nation or class of society, but who must, in order to true, full membership, know the meaning of personal communion with Jesus Christ. Everything shows us that it was a time when religion was conceived as a personal

relation between each soul and its God. Only in the strength of such a thought could Paul have fought his great battle for spirituality and freedom. We are not surprised, then, that as a result of the new life Paul expects the growth of such fine personal qualities, as insight, and discrimination, and knowledge guided by love (1. 9. 10.). We need not separate the personal life from that of the community in order to realise that only as God dwells in us, and inspires us, can we attain the fulness of Christian manhood. In fact such separation can never be complete. The statement made recently by an English statesman that, formerly, the work of religion was the saving of the soul, and now it is the saving of society, only expresses a half truth, or emphasises a popular aspect of the truth. The Reformation which was a great battle for the right of private judgment, and for the privilege of personal direct communion with God, was also a movement that exercised a tremendous political and social influence. The later evangelical revival, with its intense individualism and "otherworldliness," gave stimulus to many schemes political and social that sprang from a real desire to promote human brotherhood.

All that is quite true, and yet it is well for us to remember, that the very idea of salvation means bringing men into right relations with each other, as well as into real communion with God. One result involves the other; the faith that links us to our Father brings us into living fellowship with the brotherhood. The early church was not concerned directly with philanthropic and political

schemes for the emancipation and uplifting of men. The first thing was to kindle a life in the believer that was superior to circumstances and independent of class distinctions, and, by means of this common life, to create a community that was loyal to Jesus as Lord, witnessing to the glory of His name and waiting for His appearing. Within the church first, the great truth must be recognised and illustrated, "Ye are members one of another." Paul cared for the individual man, not as standing alone, but as a member of the community, finding the meaning of his life in receiving help from and giving help to others. We can carry forward our salvation with confidence, and yet "with fear and trembling," because the divine power is within us, seeking to express through us God's thought of human life. The same power is working in the church creating through it a living organism, which growing up into Christ the head, and showing in its varied life the divine operations of the same spirit, shall express God's thought of social service, and present to the world a symbol of the heavenly kingdom. We have not arrived at perfection of personal life, nor do we see this true catholic church. But what we do not see we hope for, and because God, who works in us and among us, is greater than all creeds and institutions, we know that patient faith will at last find its full reward.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

(II, 14-18)

Paul blends with his most earnest exhortations interesting references to his own experience; in calling men afresh to principle and duty, he shows that he is one with them in mind and heart.

In the words "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure," he has summed up the deepest truth concerning Christian experience on its two sides of divine quickening and human loyalty. He now turns from the solitary mystic experience to the life of social fellowship. Social life even within the Church, has its difficulties and dangers. It may be easy to have a cloistered peace by living a strictly separate life, but that is not the highest kind of peace. It may be easy for a man with a fine well-trained voice to sing a solo, but it is better for him at times to blend his clear, strong voice in the anthem or chorus.

There is some truth in the statement that only the man of faith is fit to see inside the Church; the cynic if he meets any "murmurings and disputings" will at once cry out that all is smallness

and bitterness. The large-heartedness of Paul is manifest in this, that he can see the promise of great power and perfection in the midst of much weakness and meanness. Paul desired in the life of the Church variety and vigour as well as purity and peace. He was not prepared to be content with a cold uniformity; he would have every man persuaded in his own mind, yet every man respectful towards the minds of others. Along that line they would find both progress and harmony, living as the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

I. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP; ITS NATURE, PRIVILEGES AND DUTY

In outward appearance there might seem to be little difference between these men and the great mass of people by whom they were surrounded. They had recently been drawn from the superstition and sensuality of the pagan world. They were not trained theologians, they were not perfect Christians, but a new living principle had entered into their lives. This principle would produce a slow silent revolution and by its working justify the power of the Gospel.

Hence, though they are just beginning the battle of life, Paul can speak of them as the "sons of God" and "luminaries," and call them to answer the expectation, live the lives, and do the work suggested by these high names. Paul does not here discuss the theological meaning of the phrase "sons of God" or show how it comes to be applied

to disciples of Jesus, or in what way natural capacity stands related to spiritual quickening. He simply says that this is the possibility and power that by God's grace is in you, and this must be the ideal of your life. This is a part of what is meant in the noble exhortation, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you—" to live as sons of God in spite of the fact that they are surrounded by those who are moved by mere earthly desires and who walk in crooked ways. To live as sons of God—this scarcely needs detailed exposition; each man must fill the phrase with noble meaning according to the measure of his intelligence and love.

A part of its meaning is defined in the words "Among whom ye are seen as luminaries." There are three words for light in the New Testament. The small candle or lamp. The great light which is an original source of light. This our Lord can use when He declares, "I am the light of the world." Then between these two the luminary or light-reflecting body of the text. This may be a body shining by reflection or even a window through which the light finds its way into the room. As the perfect light shines in the face of Jesus Christ, so real reflections of the same may beam from the face and be reflected from the life of every true disciple. Because the Christian has a word of life which has enlightened him and lifted him into loving relationship to God he can, by the very fact of his loyalty to Christ, become a mighty influence among men.

II. THE TRUE SATISFACTION OF A FAITHFUL
MINISTER

Paul does not mean that this high inspiration and true enrichment of the Christian life is for his own glory. But he states clearly that this is the end and aim of his ministry. He continues in his ministry because he must be faithful to his call and loyal to his Lord. But the purpose of all his prayerful effort and strenuous toil is to quicken in men the hope of living as sons of God. This involves intense strain and concentration. The runner who has put forth all his energy in the race and falls short by a little space is disappointed. The man who after hard wrestling in the arena is flung down and sees the prize given to another is filled with bitter weariness. Thus would it be with Paul if, when he had struggled with difficulties and faced persecution on behalf of his disciples, they allowed jealousy and party spirit to break up the harmony of their life, and drive them from the God of peace.

The apostle is not complaining or bewailing his lot; whatever the result may be, he will not run away and seek some smaller, easier task. When he gave himself to Jesus it was in full, whole-hearted fashion. Paul often used the word "joy" in such a way as to show that it is synonymous with "life," the real Christian life. Even in cross-bearing, in sacrifice of self there is joy. He is glad to pour out his life as the drink-offering that is poured upon God's altar, but he hopes also to stimulate them to the same sacrifice and priestly ministration of faith. "If I be poured out on the sacrifice

and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." These are not figures of speech. It is the altar and the wine that are symbols; this pouring out of life is the great reality, the true sacrifice. He does not compare his gift to the supreme unique sacrifice of Christ, but he has his own cross and his own sacrifice springing from that central source of inspiration.

This is the highest kind of joy, the satisfaction of service. Greater than the success of a worldly politician or the victory of a brilliant soldier is this consciousness of having rendered real service in bringing men nearer to God. "They that go forth weeping and bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them."

One noble feature of this joy is its capability of being shared, it does not give a lonely triumph, or minister to a personal vanity "And in the same manner do ye also joy and rejoice with me." The highest things are those which all true men can rejoice in, the advance of truth, the enlargement of life, the coming of the Kingdom. Without these pure strong joys the minister could not stand the constant strain; without it the people could not have real fellowship. Such joy is healthful for both minister and people, it is heaven's music which makes the heart throb and the life move in free service. It is joy in the truth, joy in the supreme sacrifice of Christ, joy in Christian fellowship, and in the hope of an evergrowing life.

THE LIVING GOSPEL IN LOWLY
LIVES



CHAPTER XV

THE LIVING GOSPEL IN LOWLY LIVES

(II, 19-25)

This is simply a piece of news about Paul and Timothy, a purely personal affair; what has it to do with the Gospel, or with our present life? That is a plausible comment, but it rests on a very superficial view of the case. A deeper thought leads us to thank God that He has given us the Revelation in such lowly forms. Books are of immense service in recording facts and preserving great truths but a man is more than his book, and humanity is greater than all books. A man who cannot write a book may have the meaning of many books struggling in his own soul. The truth may make for itself noble written forms, but it is ever panting after its full realization in the lives of men; slight touches are valuable when they bring us nearer to the man behind the book. It is good for us to know the incidents in the lives of these first preachers of the Gospel; their fears and failures are as important as their joys and triumphs. The natural way in which these came before us increases their power and meaning. The facts are not arranged with a view to effect or display. The apostle does not deal in rose-coloured statements, he expresses frankly his pain and disappointment.

He does not leave the impression that he is always on the mountain-top, that he is constantly in the mood of exultation.

As the Church was not elaborately organized it was not possible to have division of labour. Paul had to play many parts and do varied work as evangelist and teacher, home and foreign missionary, temporary pastor and travelling bishop. The cares of all the churches weighed heavily on his heart. We can well understand how he felt the need of freedom from domestic ties and business cares. There were special reasons for his peculiar position. But the very fact of such entire absorption meant a keener sense of loneliness and a deeper pain when he met with disappointments in his own field, the life of the Church.

Paul, however, did not manifest the weakness of wishing to do all the work himself, he had some of the qualities of a great and successful general. But the army had to be created before it could be controlled. The workers were few and the apostle had not sufficient scope for his skill in strategy and his power to lead. Yet evidence is not lacking that his rich personal energy was manifested in ways that quickened and guided his fellow-workers. It is a beautiful picture this of Paul and Timothy standing side by side—the veteran who had fought many battles, and the young soldier whose testing task lies before him.

Two things are here apparent which reveal the noble character of the older man. (1) His sympathy with the young man and patience in training him for high service. The apostle naturally

took an interest in one who as a boy had been brought into the Church by his ministry. After seven years' absence he was delighted to find the youth faithful to the God-given impulse as well as to the teachings of the home. Through the early stages of this young man's service the quick hopeful sympathy of his spiritual father was a mighty force. (2) The utter freedom from petty jealousy. Paul being a really strong man saw that there was room and need in the church for every kind of gift. Jealousy is a childish thing in this sphere, as no man who is really alive can have his work taken from him and done by another man. It is a reproach to the religion they profess when people of different types and temperaments cannot work together. It is good to see Christian workers, as here, minister to each other and enlarge each other's usefulness.

PAUL'S SADNESS AND ITS CAUSE

Paul's sadness does not come from brooding over his own sufferings; the anxiety shown here concerns the Philippian disciples. If he could be sure that they were prosperous in the best sense, that they were firm in the face of danger and joyful in spite of difficulties, then he would taste a pure sweet satisfaction. Many people are miserable because they are so self-centered. Paul in his confinement proves that stone walls do not make a prison, and that iron bars cannot cage the soul. His spirit defies time and space and wanders forth on its mission of mercy. He knows that all his children are in God's hand, but that faith does not

encourage carelessness, it rather quickens sympathy. From his own pains his thought turns to those whom he desired to help.

He complains that there are few who sympathize with the deep desire of his heart. There is a touch of weakness in this, but surely it is a noble form of depression; Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, in fact all great workers pass through this dark hour. The world never seems so hard and cold as when we are left alone with our noblest aims and most cherished plans. The zealous minister and enthusiastic teacher often find that the hardest cross they have to bear is the inability or unwillingness of others to sympathize with their unselfish purposes.

THE GLEAM OF HOPE

Paul's commendation of Timothy shines out all the brighter against this dark background. Here was one who responded according to the measure of his capacity to the trust reposed in him. Timothy has had the privilege of living with Paul. It is an honour and a help to abide in the company of a great man, but in proportion to the privilege is the responsibility. Gehazi the servant of Elisha cannot rise to the opportunity, he goes out from his master's presence a thief carrying a curse instead of a blessing. Judas Iscariot from a higher privilege passes to a more dreadful doom. The gentle Timothy drew inspiration and strength from the heroic example of his leader. Now he must stand in that master's place and do his work. Under such a strain he needs sympathy and thoughtful men will gladly give it. It is only

shallow people who will stay away from Church because they must hear Timothy instead of Paul. The wisest and strongest rejoice when young men are raised up to fill the places of departing saints; they know that the thoughtful sensitive young man will slowly grow into greater influence.

Paul is sure that the young man can represent him better than the noblest letter, but yet he longs to see his disciples face to face and declare to them once more the message of eternal love. He is not supremely a scholar or philosopher; he is essentially a preacher, he is always longing for personal relationship and living contact. In Paul's letter we can find some hint of his varied and wonderful power, but it was in actual speech that the power found its fullest and freest expression. The personality of the man, the excitement awakened by living truths, the atmosphere created by the prayers of earnest men, these things cannot be represented in black and white. The fellowship in the truth quickens the holiest enthusiasm. Paul could hardly face fierce opposition. He had great joy in bringing the truth to bear against keen opponents, but a sweeter joy he tasted when he imparted the loftier truths to eager sympathizing disciples. He longed for fellowship, and such fellowship, we believe, he now enjoys in a higher world.

CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE UNCHANGING GOD

With such a craving for that which is deepest and best in human life a man can be strong and

steady in this sphere of change and uncertainty. Three times in this short passage the same phrase occurs; "the things concerning you" twice, "the things concerning me," once (English version "your state" and "how it will go with me"). Paul like all of us has to do with circumstances, the things that stand round us, that act and re-act upon our life. To him the inward state is most important but he cannot despise the outward conditions. He does not differ from common men in any magical superiority over circumstances; the details of to-morrow are as dark to him as to any one of us, but behind all the uncertainties he can see the thread of divine purpose and feel the pulse of redeeming love. Thus natural anxiety is kept from passing into fretful feverish care. The things round about the disciples may be sickness and persecution. That which is in front of Paul may mean larger freedom or swift departure. These things are uncertain to the man of keenest insight. Such conditions are ever shifting constantly changing, but they are not left to capricious chance or cold fate. While this particular passage is concerned chiefly with temporal things, there throbs behind it the conviction that all life's chances and changes are in the hands of God.

"Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown
Jesus we know and He is on the throne."

FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE

CHAPTER XVI

FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE

(II, 25-30)

Again we are reminded that this epistle is suffused with personal feeling, and manifests continually the thoughtfulness and generosity of the great apostle. Here he shows the kind of fellowship that was created by the preaching of the gospel. The Christian religion does not profess to banish sorrow, or to make men insensible to pain, but it brings the sweetest and purest power of consolation that ever came into a sorrowful world. In the darkest periods of his life Paul reveals both tenderness and hopefulness. He was neither sheltered from sorrow nor hardened against it, but the "light afflictions" were received as a kindly discipline in the strength of a great faith that could declare that "to them that love God all things work together for good."

As prisoner at Rome, he had heavy burdens of pain and loneliness. But those among whom he had toiled and suffered cherished the memory of his service. Real gratitude seeks suitable expression. Hence the Philippians sent to Rome a faithful brother with messages of good will and substantial tokens of their love. They would gladly have ministered to Paul's needs had he been with

them, and they are determined to show that with them it is not a case of "out of sight, out of mind." With all his desire for independence, it was not possible for him to refuse the gifts that came in an hour of need and brought sunshine into his life.* There was a timeliness and delicacy about this attention from distant disciples; to have rejected it coldly would have been to stifle the noblest spirit of self-sacrifice. The gift was not asked or expected; it was a spontaneous outburst of generosity, a matter of pure Christian sentiment free from all cold calculation. He regarded such giving as a form of Christian fellowship, the energy poured into their life returning to him in friendly forms.

In those days the journey from Philippi to Rome might be both dangerous and difficult; and the man who undertook this commission needed energy and wisdom as well as earnestness. Of Epaphroditus we know little, and that little concerned his character and work rather than his circumstances. He may be the "servant of Jesus Christ" mentioned in the epistle to the Colossians under the name of Epaphros, but that is not certain. The important thing here is that when sent to minister to the apostle, he himself became a sufferer and a recipient of sympathetic care. He was seized with sickness and brought nigh unto death, but in the mercy of God his life was spared and Paul was saved from a new burden of sorrow. Strangely are sorrow and joy mingled in this mortal life, the effort to send to the beloved teacher a cheering light almost plunged him into

*See chap. xxviii.

tragic darkness. When Epaphroditus was recovering from his sickness he naturally felt a longing for home, and he was afraid lest his friends having heard of his affliction, should be tormented with fear on his account. Paul shows thoughtfulness in sending back the messenger as well as in the noble words by which his service is acknowledged. As the artist represents a figure by a few cunning strokes, so Paul in a few well-chosen words pictures for us the character and work of Epaphroditus.

"Fellow-Christian." Brother means here more than fellowman. It designates a disciple belonging to the same community, and possessing the same faith. He had cast in his lot with the new brotherhood and was not ashamed to be known as a follower of Jesus. There was then no cant or conventionality about the word brother, it had then a new throbbing life behind it, it gave new meaning and larger range to the thought of fraternity.

"Fellow-worker." He is not a passive brother, living on the common store, he is a worker and contributes energy as well as substance to the cause. He would not have been chosen for this important commission if he had not already shown zeal and faithfulness in common duties. Work is also a form of worship; the communion of saints means co-operation in noble enterprises.

"Fellow-soldier." There is fighting as well as work in every stage of the church's life. Because Epaphroditus was willing to do his share he is classed by the great leader as a fellow-soldier. This man stood side by side with Paul in the conflict at Rome and helped to fight the first great

battles of the Christian faith. Here is a noble career for our young men who are called to be soldiers of Christ. We are not called to little quarrels and small contentions, but to fight for great principles and everlasting truths. It is well when a man's service can be summed up in these three words—brother, worker, soldier.

A LOFTY DESCRIPTION OF LOWLY SERVICE

The man's service may seem to be comparatively small, but it is described in the loftiest terms, and this not from mere extravagance of speech but from the splendid idealism inspired by Christian faith. Paul speaks of him as "apostle and minister." Sent upon a simple kindly errand, his service is dignified as a form of apostleship, his work being described in a word which suggests the highest Christian dignity. Here is a broad view of apostleship and ministry. These words—minister and apostle—have a stricter sense, but this use of them reminds us that the highest officialism exists to create the broadest human service. The deed of friendship may be performed in a spirit of an apostle; the outpouring of love is a real service at God's altar.

(1) It is good to take a lofty view of lowly things. The cynical mood that belittles everything withers up our worship and spoils our service. Why should there be this lasting chronicle of this man's trivial service? Because it was not trivial, the spirit of the Cross was in it, and that redeems the smallest thing from insignificance. All our work has a weak side and much imperfection clings to it, but it is

well to look out upon life in a large loving spirit. The real earnest worker knows his own weakness, hence he is in danger of despondency, and a few of words of friendly greeting and kindly appreciation will do good and not harm. There is nothing more miserable than petty jealousy and needless depreciation. Some people take the smallest possible view of every service. The friendly message is to them merely a piece of fussiness; the Sunday School teacher is an amateur who fancies that he is doing something important; the preacher is a babbler talking about great things that no one comprehends. This kind of thing can be dressed up smartly and retailed with an air of mock modesty, but when we catch a glimpse of the real service rendered by men of insight and enthusiasm, such cynical folly is put to shame.

(2) To unbelief it may seem presumption to link God so intimately to our little life, but faith is bold and can say that God measures out sorrow to His children and knows when they have had enough. Many people were concerned in this affliction, perhaps a mother waiting anxiously for her son, and certainly the congregation expecting the return of its servant. All this pressed upon the heart of Paul and increased his pain. Miracle did not enter into the current of his common life, he had no magical power to rob pain of its bitterness, but he has the mighty energy of faith and love. He accepted the sorrows of life from the hands of a loving God. If we cannot settle the hard problem of suffering, and reconcile it with the power and wisdom of God, we may still believe

that it is measured out by a merciful hand. In due time we shall be delivered from "overmuch grief" and find hope in the darkness.

(3) Paul could rejoice in the power of the Christian religion to inspire heroic courage. Prudence is good in its place, but there is a time for sacred recklessness, for the boldness which, for a high purpose, is willing to risk even life. The Christian faith has been handed down to us by men who hazarded their life. It was charged against the early disciples that they were carried away by fanatic carelessness, and showed a foolish contempt in the presence of death. That was a false charge. They valued life for its opportunities of usefulness but would not pay too high a price for it, or sacrifice real life for the mere sake of living. The same scornful critics have little to say against those who gamble life away for some paltry prize, or waste it in foolish or sinful self-indulgence. The Christian religion, rightly understood, teaches us to prize our common life and keep it sweet and wholesome, but it also shows to us the path of wise self-sacrifice and declares that to lose life for Christ's sake is to find the fuller life for which we hunger. Paul was stronger through his boldness than if he had always been taking care of himself in a small fastidious fashion. Epaphroditus was nobler when he hazarded his life in the service of love than if he had stayed at home to seek the path of comfort and ease. We honour God and ourselves by holding "such in honour." We owe the best we possess to men who have manifested the self-sacrificing spirit.

A GREAT CLAIM AND A GOOD
CONFESSION

CHAPTER XVII

A GREAT CLAIM AND A GOOD CONFESSION

(III, 1-8)

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” This sentence seems to suggest that the letter is coming to a close, and that may have been the intention of the writer when these kindly words were penned. Even in that case, it would have been a noble epistle full of lofty truth, and reflecting a high type of Christian life. But we are glad that by some impulse the apostle was led to give vindication of his spiritual life and peculiar teaching. In a half apologetic tone he says “to write the same things, to me is not troublesome, and for you it is safe.” That statement probably refers not merely to the exhortation to rejoice, but to the important teaching which this chapter contains. Similar teaching is more fully developed in the epistle to the Galatians, a letter which exercised a powerful influence over Luther, and gave him support and strength in his heroic efforts to bring back the freedom and simplicity of the Gospel. Even now, in the battle with false ritualism and unchristian dogmatism, it is difficult to find mightier weapons than the words of Paul. The great principles of Christian life will bear repetition. To recite too often the same words may mean mental stagnation, but

the same great truths can be presented in richly varied forms.

I. THE WARNING

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision.” Paul was a man of gentleness and courtesy, but he was also a man of impetuous feeling, and at times strong words were extorted from him. It is not personal hatred or proud contempt that lies behind these words, but the desire to protect his converts. He is indignant against those who would spoil his work by their perverse attempt to make proselytes. When we know their small spirit, and mean methods, we do not wonder that he was forced into a passionate protest, and flung forth the biting words, “Beware of dogs.” The world was wide, and these men might have found neglected places in which to preach their peculiar views, but they dogged his steps in order to thwart his plans and render his work useless. It is an evil thing to entangle feeble disciples in controversy, to make a fetish of sectarian ceremony, and demand that all shall bow down to it. In such circumstances even a broad-minded man may be driven to declare that the ceremony which once served a noble use is a merely external and a contemptible thing.

II. PAUL’S CLAIM

The Apostle is never merely negative; here as elsewhere proceeds at once to make a large, positive claim in favor of the Christian Church. “We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus,

and have no confidence in the flesh." This is not simply setting up the narrowness of a new sect against the bigotry of Judaism. In a certain sense the Christian religion was the child of Judaism, but when the Jews sought to crush the Christian Church by persecution and false teaching, Paul maintained that the new faith was the real fulfilment of the prophets, and the true interpretation of the law. This claim could not at that time be made on the strength of any historic greatness, external splendour, or social prestige. The new faith was a small despised sect but its leaders claimed to be "the heirs of all the ages." Religion is no longer to be a matter of national distinction or ceremonial attainment. Christianity does not create a new ritualism or another caste; it honours our common humanity and glorifies the all-embracing love of God.

(1) This new society is composed of those who render service to God under the inspiration of the spiritual life which He imparts through the Christ, those "who worship by the spirit of God." The word rendered "worship" is a sacred term, it means religious service, but the mention of "the Spirit" guards us against any low, narrow interpretation. Because the Christians had no altar it seemed to both Jews and pagans that they had no religious service. The Christian religion claims to have a nobler ritual and a richer service (James I, 27). In the spirit of the ancient prophets the early disciples sought to make "the service of humanity" a part of the service of God, and to find in acts of common

goodness the real signs and ceremonies of the faith.

(2) Christians are, further, men whose supreme glory is in Jesus Christ. He is to them more than any hero or philosopher, poet or prophet. They glory in His life, death, and teaching, because through these there comes a clearer revelation of the loving purpose which gives meaning to the world, and hope to human life. The after ages have vindicated this large, triumphant faith; we can now see more clearly than ever that the teaching of our Lord will bear the fiercest light, and that it can adapt itself to the most radical changes in circumstances and modes of thought.

(3) From this there follows the attitude of mind that refuses to place "confidence in the flesh," even though the temptation to do so is strong. Paul possessed many of the advantages which give rise to pride, and favour the formation of caste. But these things, which in themselves have their uses, he stamps with the disparaging word "flesh," when the attempt is made to count them as signs of merit and means of salvation. Since the Church has become so elaborately organized it is open to the temptations that beset the Judaism of Paul's time; it may trust in its temples, its antiquity, its standing in the civilized world, its beautiful services; but, as a matter of fact, if these take the place of God and the soul's own life, they are so much "flesh"; the living believer who is reading God's present message and finding new applications of the cross may be nobler than any or all of them.

III. PAUL'S PROFESSION

The apostle illustrates the general truth by his own particular personal experience. This is both interesting and appropriate, as his life more than that of any other man was bound up with the vindication of this great spiritual principle. He could sing the Psalm of Love, but HIS MAIN TASK was to fight the battle of faith as against a stiff formalism. (I Cor. XIII.) In his case, conversion meant a complete revolution in his thought and feeling concerning the service of God. The things which he once regarded as valuable prizes to be struggled for he now sees to have been hindrances to the higher life. He has now a larger theology and a deeper experience. His resistance to the ritualistic teachers was so strong and persistent, not merely because in the light of the new religion their demands were foolish and futile, but because he had proved by experience that no small, legal perfection could meet the needs of a hungry, aspiring soul. He had cherished pride of birth, and rejoiced in his pure Hebrew blood and descent from a nation of heroes and saints. He had gloried in his orthodoxy, for did he not belong to the strictest sect within the true Church? He had surrendered himself to the Law and sought to fulfil all its demands. A consistent Jew of pure blood, of strict life, of high education and great religious privileges, a servant of the law and a persecutor of heretics, what more than this could be expected of any Son of Abraham? In theory it seemed quite satisfactory, and many maintained

that it was so in actual experience. But this man has been in the presence of Sinai's awful thunders, and has passed from thence to Calvary's gentle light. The vision of the Christ has made him see the depths of his own nature and the height of heaven's perfection. Now he says; the things that were for me the prizes of life I cast aside as worthless in comparison with the love of Christ that constraineth me. This is a good confession and it may still be made by the man of real thoughtfulness and true spiritual insight. All questions of merit and legalism are swept away when once we see the real nature of that love which stooped down to bear our burdens, to rob sin of its sting, and shame of its bitterness. Once Jesus captures our personal trust and loyalty we know Him as our Saviour, Teacher, and Ideal, and through the sight we gain sweet satisfaction and abiding strength. The mightiest proof of the divine power of Jesus Christ is this significant fact, that He has solved the problem of life for so many of the world's wisest and strongest men.

THE CHIEF GOOD

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CHIEF GOOD

(III, 8-14)

When Paul sets before us the secret of his conversion, and the stimulus of his constant striving, he gives us a living illustration of the law of life revealed in the career of Jesus, and set before His disciples in the great saying, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." Paul speaks to us of real loss and real gain. The process was painful but the result was satisfactory. To meditate upon this rich statement of a manifold experience is full of profit, precisely because it shows the actual working in the case of a really strong man, of that which is for all of us the essential principle of the Christian life. When he became a loser, he lost a whole world of claims and privileges (verses 1-7), but he entered into a larger world of knowledge, love, and activity. The only reason for this tremendous change is that which he himself gives—real conviction, true vision and spiritual constraint. On the side of Christ there was then no pride of learning, no coercion of public opinion, no worldly attractions, no allurements of society. He may have been haunted by misgivings, and tormented by doubts, but

these could not have caused him to fling aside his early convictions unless something more living and authoritative had appealed to his soul. In the critical hour there is given to his soul a deeper sense of need, and a vision of that way of salvation which led to satisfaction and strength. When this clear conviction comes he is swift and decisive in action. If he looks back it is not with regret; the parting with it is over, he can set it in a true light and take its real measurement. He does not claim to reach perfection at one stroke, but he does tell us that he has a clear aim and steady purpose. Any man who has reached this position has made a great gain even if he has paid a great price.

THE CHIEF GOOD

Men have discussed with varied degrees of subtlety and wisdom the great question "What is the supreme good for the human spirit"? To that Paul has a very definite answer. He does not argue as to the reasonableness and universality of his own view of life; he simply sets it forth in a very strong fashion, as the vision of truth which has given to his own life both rest and progress, satisfaction and aspiration. Every man must solve this problem for himself, but as the same God gives us life, and the same passions stir our souls, the real experience of our fellow-men may be a true revelation throwing light upon our path. Hear, then, this living word. To gain Christ, to be found in Him, to possess a righteousness that comes through faith in Him, to know the power of His resurrection and to have fellowship

with His sufferings—surely this is a lofty aim, a comprehensive programme, a quickening aspiration. The whole statement is alive, every sentence glowing with a special signification, every line quivering with energetic meaning. Can we wonder that former prizes were lightly esteemed, and earthly ambitions lost all power to attract, when this all-absorbing vision took possession of the man's head and heart?

He desires to hold fast to Christ as personal friend and present helper; he wishes to have it proved that he is living and moving in the world that Christ has created; he hungers for the real righteousness that comes from God to the believing soul, he longs after a growing knowledge of the power of Christ's resurrection; he even dares to hope that he may have communion with the sufferings of Christ and be conformed to His death. That Jesus of Nazareth kindled such hopes in the minds of companions who looked dimly forward to the future is a great thing, but that from the unseen world, He still continues to capture mighty souls, and satisfy hungry hearts is a proof of a real and divine presence.

Men ask for a short simple creed; Paul gives it to us in one word "Christ." That is short but not simple in any shallow sense. How can a strong energetic man be satisfied with anything simple? Such a creed may be simple to a child, for in the simplicity of a child there is something of insight and sublimity because there is promise of growth. But it cannot be simple to a lazy, ignorant man; the way in which he boasts of

"simplicity" shows that he has never gained a glimpse of its ever-widening significance. Its very mission is to cast out self-conceit, and, breaking up stagnation, it stimulates hope and progress.

The strength and beauty of it is in the fact that it is a personal manifestation of truth. Philosophies may gather round it, and theologies come out of it, but it exerts its convincing, converting power in its living personal form. God comes near to Paul in the lowly crucified Teacher, solving all problems and meeting all needs. Science and philosophy have a high place, but they do not claim to take this place. They help us to understand God's world, and to read his purpose in literature and life, but what our whole nature hungers for is a revelation of God Himself. This revelation is in its real power and deep meaning always the same, but the form varies; the proof that any particular man has gained it, is seen in his power to conquer self and serve man, in other words, to be a companion of Christ. If a man has a faith that gives both light and love, rest and stimulus, achievement and progress, the "chief good" that draws him onward is no vain fancy but a real vision from God.

THE LIVING POWER OF FAITH

This supreme good is not a finished attainment, nor is it a future distant possession; it is a living movement, an actual present experience whose outcome shall be glorious and complete. Christ has laid hold of Paul, and so in a measure he

possesses Him, yet the man is still living and eager "to win Christ." It is not on some future judgment day that Paul wishes to be found in Christ, but now in the hour of battle, when men watch his conduct, and the all-searching gaze of God lights upon him. Neither is the righteousness a distant, disconnected thing, outside of himself, but that which, under the inspiration of love, has already begun to grow. The communion with the sufferings of Christ he has already tasted, and now he only longs to be so guided that all his pains may have a sacrificial sweetness and power. Because he is in a real sense a risen man he can follow Christ even in his dying. When we regard faith as a spiritual energy, and life as a growing enlarging experience, many small controversies pass away.

By faith a man learns that there is a present kingdom of God, a kingdom "not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." To this faith the kingdom is coming, but in one sense it has already come. Prophets of the olden time lived in it, and their strivings prepared for its fuller manifestation. No external form or visible institution can completely embody this kingdom, but it gives to them all the life they possess. This kingdom is wide as the love of God; our efforts to circumscribe it are vain; faith does not attempt to limit it, but seeks its centre in the presence of the King.

By faith a man enters into this kingdom, becomes a free citizen, and finds himself at home.

He understands the alien world that he has left and judges it in the light of truth. Here he finds strength and freedom, the air is sweet and bracing: it is a land of liberty because it is the realm of obedience. In this region religion is not dependent upon complex arguments or timid apologies, since it shines in its own light, and uplifts by its own power. By faith a man proves the reality and energy of righteousness, a righteousness not his own, and yet a righteousness that he must make completely his own. He sees it in the life of all the saints. He knows the battles it has fought and the victories it has won. He feels its quickening power within himself, and knows that this is the real prize of life. He finds the righteousness in the life of Christ driving away the darkness, bearing shame, and conquering death.

By faith a man becomes a companion of Christ; the shame, the sacrifice, the glory, become his portion and have a deep meaning for life. As Christ had taken up the Cross for the salvation of men, so Paul would take up his cross and follow Christ. As Christ had risen victorious over sin and death, so Paul would rise in fellowship with his Master into the glory of a new life. He never cherished the thought that the cross of Christ was for him a convenient escape from suffering, but rather a power by which to conquer sin and take away the sting out of sorrow. The way of the cross was open to him by faith, he saw its meaning and chose it as the way of service and the way to God. The bearing of the cross is not an artificial penance or unreal imitation; it is the life of the

man of faith who has seen into his own heart and the heart of Christ. Large knowledge, clear insight, tender sympathy, gracious helpfulness are given to the man who can truly say, "I count all things but loss that I may win Christ."

THE POWER OF A SUPREME LOVE
FOR CHRIST

CHAPTER XIX

THE POWER OF A SUPREME LOVE FOR CHRIST

(III, 8-11)

This is not the enthusiastic resolution, the impulsive promise, of a young convert looking out upon a new career. If that were its real character it would still be worthy of respectful consideration; for life would be very poor without the buoyant hopes and high resolves of youth. But it means more as the presentation of the dominant principle of a man's life, whose course had been one of steady perseverance and unceasing progress, in the face of fierce opposition. A man must of course see a principle before he can live it, but to others the proof of insight and conviction is the life that grows out of it. Therefore we must consider this statement on the two sides, as the clear conviction that gave unity and meaning to the man's thought, and as the central article of the creed that stood the stress and strain of life.

Here he deliberately places all worldly attractions and earthly privileges on one side, and in comparison with the winning of Christ counts them as so much contemptible refuse. That these things are absolutely worthless he would be the last to maintain, but in so far as they would hinder real appreciation of Christ's saving power and

spiritual influence, they are put out of court. That Paul possessed these privileges was of real advantage to him; they also, in their own way, prepared him for the larger service to which he was called. But the fact is, as he himself clearly shows that he would never have entered into the larger field of missionary effort, if he had not placed these very things under his feet, or rather laid them at the feet of Christ. Thus do the things that we cast away for Christ's sake become more truly our own; and when they are lightly esteemed they are of more service to the world than when we yield to them our supreme worship. It is an advantage to us that this matter is discussed not from the point of view of what may be, in general, the value of patriotism, of dogmatism, and ritualism; but what is given is the revelation of the man's deepest secret, the declaration of his dominant passion. The personal nature of this confession brings it very near to us because the spiritual nature of earnest intelligent men is very much the same in all ages. The passionate protest of the prophet, the eager aspiration of the psalmist, the clear confession of the apostle is not quite foreign to us. The form of the battle changes, but the conflict is the same. A man of Paul's temper does not wish to be a model for slavish imitation, but by the strength of his personality he becomes a type; studying him we are learning something concerning the working of God in human life and the grace that is revealed in Christ. All are ours, Paul, Peter, and John, and men who in every century have looked the facts

full in the face and refused to be content with any half-answer or second-hand creed. It is well to have a supreme passion giving unity and power to our own life; it is salvation when the passion is a noble one proving its high origin and healthful force. The man consumed with greed of gold we call with sad suggestiveness a miser. The real philanthropist is not merely active on committees, but is a true minister of mercy to mankind. The worldling contented with shallow sensations and outward shows does not find the heart of things. We may misuse these labels and cruelly misapply them, but they have a real meaning in the radical difference of aim and dominant purpose that distinguishes the lives of men. In this sense Paul may be called a Christian, not that he expresses all truth or embodies all virtue in absolute form, but that he is one of the earliest and noblest witnesses of the power of Jesus to found a kingdom of love in the heart of a strong man of varied capacity and large demands.

CONVICTIONS CHANGED

Paul was a logician, and vindicated the rights of reason; yet, with proper qualification, we may say that love, not logic, was the cause of his conversion. It may be hard for us to understand how the vision of Jesus acted upon his soul, but the fact is there, and the result remains. It is not likely that Paul was unaffected by arguments and pleadings; these doubtless had an influence even when they seemed only to produce bitter resistance. The sight of calm believers and silent

sufferers also had a real message for him. The turning-point came, when he recognized the real meaning of the pathetic words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." That this was no vain fancy but a voice from heaven cannot be a matter of argument in any shallow sense; a man must test his own visions, find out whence they come and whither they lead. Then, happy the man who can say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

A new view of the Messiah is given to him; and he accepts the cross and all its shame, now that he sees its meaning. The rejected Nazarene is seen to be indeed a King; One who has a rightful claim to rule the soul. The aspects of the new faith, which once led him to treat it with contempt as a fanatical apostasy from the true tradition, now reveal their harmony with the hopes kindled by the highest teaching of the past, and with the deeper needs of his own spirit. This changed view of Jesus is the key to the whole situation. Henceforth "Jesus" and "Christ," two names that stood far apart, in irreconcilable contradiction, are to be so blended in his thought that they are no longer two but one. To know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified is now recognized as a worthy aim, which a man may pursue with both intensity and breadth. From the cross, as a central position, the whole of life is illumined, and every question of living interest can find a real solution. This involves a changed view of self. Religion is now self-sacrifice rather than self-culture. The centre of the world has shifted, and

is no longer found in his own life, with its painful strivings but in the life of Christ, as the revelation of God's light and love. In both cases to a man so earnest in purpose and energetic in temperament it must be a toilsome process; but in the one case it is to grasp something that ever remained outside, in the other to work out a life that had been inspired from within. In the one case the man, measuring himself by conventional standards, may find that wherein he may glory; in the other he beholds a perfection which, though it has stooped down and touched his heart is, in its eternal majesty, as high as the throne of God.

This means an altogether different view of the world, that is, the world of men. The world of nature, of science, and of art, did not appeal to Paul in the same way as to the noblest of the Greeks and to the most thoughtful of modern men. The spirit in which he lived is consistent with the purest thoughts and broadest views on these subjects, but he was predominantly the missionary of a new faith. The change that came to him through the love of Christ broke down the walls of the little world in which he had been living, and caused him to look upon all men with a new brotherly interest and hope. Class distinctions were real enough to him, but they withered away as he thought of men in their relation to Christ and to each other.

THE CONDUCT CONTROLLED

All this would be interesting as theology, but it is as life that it comes before us. That it made

Paul a thinker in the higher sense is quite true. All his activity is intelligent and proceeds from one central principle, but the point needing emphasis now is that the stimulus of these great thoughts sent him round the world to proclaim this faith to all who would receive it. We do not undervalue the thinker who stimulates and trains the mental life; for the man whose life is quiet and uneventful may send forth far-reaching quickening influences. It was, however, impossible for Paul to lead such a life; neither his temperament nor the needs of the time would allow it. The world's heart was aching for a new manifestation of religion. The possession of a new life always, but specially in such an age, carried with it the responsibility for large and varied service. Correct opinion is good, but noble conduct is the final test, and in this case it meant preaching as a missionary, instructing patiently as a teacher, and suffering as a martyr.

As a missionary he marks an epoch in the life of the world. The movement that he led had long been prepared for, and it came in "the fulness of times." Thinkers and workers, prophets and poets, in all ages and in many lands, had seen visions and cherished hopes of something larger than any mere local religion. The Son of God had spoken the word of freedom and had given a large commission. There were many Christian disciples who felt that great changes were pending, and had a presentiment of an expanding kingdom. But when all this is said—and we need

to say it in order to do justice to a great question—it is still true that here was a great leader and a new type of missionary.

As a teacher his toil is strenuous and varied. He is not content with a small definite formula; he is not ambitious to hand down a hard tradition; his aim is to train thoughtful disciples, and to create a living community. This means not only intelligence and industry; it demands insight and patience. He must face misinterpretation and be willing to re-iterate in varied forms lessons that to himself are clear as the noon-day. The result in his own day seems to have been slow and unsatisfactory, but important as the work was for that generation, its significance is far from being exhausted, and its ruling principles the Church needs to-day as much as ever.

As a martyr he showed men how to meet persecution with dignity and hopefulness. He did not covet the martyr's crown in any such foolish fashion as to run recklessly into danger. He was willing to share in the sufferings of Christ. He counted it an honour to suffer in a good cause, but he did not run to seek the suffering; he took it as God sent it, and like all the true prophets, he found it in the path of duty. He sought to express in all these lines of conduct, the love that had penetrated to the depths of his being and changed his whole life.

THE SOUL SATISFIED

Men have changed their opinions and modified their conduct without finding real satisfaction.

The change was real but not radical; the problem of life was not really solved. Rest of a poor unworthy kind is not our portion; real satisfaction we must have. The test of a true religion is that it meets all the legitimate demands of the soul; that in it our past, present and future shall find their meaning. There must be rest at the centre if there is to be living movement all round. A man like Paul would have worn his spirit down by restless chafing, if he had not found a satisfactory relation to God and his fellow-men. He did find such reconciliation; and the rich result we see in his life. Every exposition that we have given of his ideas as they sought to embody themselves in action, and instil themselves into the minds of his disciples, shows that it was real life that he found, life with a large outlook and an undying hope. To know what is meant by "winning Christ" we must pass in review the many-sided statements of truth and the lofty ideals of conduct that he set before himself and his followers. It was not merely the forgiveness of past sins, though that was a proper subject for warmest gratitude; it was not simply the vision of future blessedness, though that was a consoling power in many a trying hour; it was a present satisfaction that linked these into living unity, and proved that faith in the unseen world is the mightiest force to equip a man for stern tasks and tender ministries.

The revelation of God in Christ evidently met the needs and fully satisfied the demands of this man with his restless energy and keen vision. The

question arises, Can it meet the needs of similar men to-day? We believe that it can, when men look at it in its own light and do not fasten it down to outworn forms of thought, or identify it too closely with that which is local and temporary. The intellectual and social problems of our time are different; questions are forced upon us that were unknown to Paul; and even in the realm of theology we cannot live upon the outward form of this man's thought. But we can see clearly that the cross of Christ was a revelation to him of truth that is eternal, the truth that God stoops down to forgive our sin and bear our sorrow, that the highest manifestation of this eternal love is in the gentle service of Jesus, and that the man who is constrained by the power of the divine love and seeks to express his worship of God in his service of men, finds in nobler forms the life that he gives. All this is truth central, vital, and creative in its influence. It may be appropriated by the men of to-day who are touched by the spirit of faith and reverence, whatever may be the nature of their activity, or the character of their culture. "Dying yet we live" is a word of deep and abiding significance in every sphere of thought and conduct.

THE RISEN LORD AND THE RISEN
LIFE

CHAPTER XX

THE RISEN LORD AND THE RISEN LIFE

(III, 10, 11)

The Resurrection of Jesus is a matter of immense importance for the faith of the first disciples, and it becomes at once a central theme in their preaching. To Paul it was a fact of history, and a force of the spiritual life; it is in the latter sense that it is set forth here. The apostle is not now concerned with proving that Jesus actually rose from the dead; he is not moving in the realm of controversial apologetics, but declaring and defining the influence that a living sympathetic union with the Christ exerts over his own life. By faith, he has risen with Christ, and hence he possesses a confident hope of attaining to the resurrection of the dead. Even when he deals with the doctrine of the resurrection, in his most argumentative manner, his great aim is not so much to prove that Jesus rose as that His disciples will rise from the dead. He does indeed state that faith in the resurrection is of vital importance, and that if sin and death have conquered, in the case of Christ, there is no hope for us. Jesus had been seen alive by credible witnesses, and had revealed Himself to Paul, hence there is no need to doubt this glorious truth, that He has completed His sacrifice, conquered death, and opened the Kingdom of

heaven to all believers. The questions which exercise and torment the minds of many reverent thinkers, as to how these things can be, he does not consider with any elaborate manner; in the one case he does not touch them at all, and in the other, he has given one suggestion, drawn from the analogy of the seed that through death enters into a fuller life. He moves altogether in the sphere of history and religion; the problems which come to us from what we now call the world of science did not exist, in the same way, for him.

The great thought that runs through the teaching of Paul is the vital union of the believer with Christ, a union now of spirit and life which will grow into a union of character and destiny. Though he dwells on the two sides of historical reality and spiritual power, it is the actual present grasp that Christ has upon his personal experience that, more and more, becomes prominent and significant in his thought. If we now consider well this living thread that runs through all his preaching, we shall see that for such a man history and doctrine are valuable, in so far as they can reproduce themselves in the life of the believing man. History is the revelation of God, the life and death of Jesus Christ is the fullest manifestation of His perfect justice and unconquerable love. But God still reveals Himself to men of open mind and willing spirit. The life and death of Jesus is not finished in the sense that it is a mere external substitution. We may make fine distinctions, in our schemes of thought, but Christian experience means living over again the life of

Christ. The faith that sees the meaning of His life and appropriates the saving virtue of His sacrifice is, in itself, a beginning of the new God-given life. Paul declares that he died with Christ; He shares the self-sacrificing sufferings, and hopes to attain unto the same glorious resurrection. This is no exaggeration; it is no mere figure of speech; it is only poetic in the sense that every such presentation of living truth is poetic. It is not something peculiar to Paul, though he saw it with special clearness and lived it with remarkable consistency. If the life which he claims to possess were not possible to all of us, it might be interesting as a piece of history, but would not be a suitable subject for a religious meditation. The lives of prophets and apostles, of saints, and heroes depend for their quickening power upon this fact, that in them we see at work the principles which underlie our own deepest life. What the resurrection meant to Paul, as a power of life, it may mean to us; "now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept," has a great significance. It is a sweet gracious word for the present, as well as a rich promise for the future.

(1) The Teacher who fulfilled in Himself the hopes and prophecies of the past is the Saviour of men. In Him religion becomes spiritual, and drops the ceremonial wrappings and local limitations, so that it can go forth to meet men's needs, and adapt itself to different modes of thought. Though this was in His teaching from the first, men could not see it clearly until they

learned to think of Him as exalted to a loftier place and wielding a wider influence. He has not simply risen from the dead. He has gone up to His rightful throne, from which He exercises kingly power, which was not possible to Him as a Jew among His own people. The risen Christ is to Paul the ideal man in whom all superficial distinctions are abolished, and from whom there issues a quickening power which every child-like spirit can receive. The ritualists who stirred his fierce indignation were from this point of view traitors to the King.

(2), This exaltation of the Christ implies the completion of His supreme service as reconciling in Himself the life of God and man. The manifestation of God in Christ condemns our wicked lawlessness, and through the sacrifice of obedience, brings near the forgiving love, which takes away the sting of sin and the bitterness of death. As He moved among men He broke down the barriers set up by religious pride and intolerance; in His presence the outcasts of society felt the power of a divine sympathy. This pity of God is now seen to dwell in the heavenly sphere and to be available for all who are bowed down under the burden of sin and sorrow. Indeed this love was always in the heart of God, but now that it has been made flesh and has dwelt among men, it has become the common property of all who can see the meaning of that great life.

(3), Goodness is vindicated and enthroned. A new answer is given to the old problem of suffering. He who surrendered Himself to God most

completely was rejected and defeated. The Man whose life was to be for all peoples the highest type of goodness was doomed to the shameful cross. But the message of the Risen Lord is that it is well for a man to lose his life for the sake of God and goodness. We know that with Paul this was not a theory or sentiment but a living creed and consistent practice.

(4), The life which the Risen Saviour begets in those who trust and love Him is such that death cannot destroy it; it claims kinship with the divine and eternal, it springs up into eternal life. Paul knows that he possesses this life; he traces to it his noblest thoughts and most faithful service; he desires to keep it pure and make full proof of it in his ministry; and thus he will attain unto the resurrection of the dead. To work into one clear, grand scheme of thought all the history and theology that lies behind these beliefs and aspirations would require much time and skill. Paul does not attempt that here. The burden of his argument tends to show the vanity of trusting in anything save Christ and His revelation of truth and love, and to conduct this argument effectively to its goal he must show the many links which bind Him to that Christ who satisfies every need of mind and heart.

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE PAST

CHAPTER XXI

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE PAST

(III, 13).

It has been seriously discussed whether the possession or the pursuit of truth is the more to be desired; Paul seems to say that for real life of mind and heart we must have both. The truth is not a toy very desirable to the child in anticipation but in possession tame and wearisome. A man could not continue in the pursuit of truth if he was not sustained by its power. The real truth-seeker must often be refreshed by glimpses of its beauty. Those who insist upon the glory of pursuit remind us rightly that the joy of life is in the activity of noble powers. There is sweet exhilaration in healthy movement, whether of brain or muscle. The rest that a living man enjoys is not merely sleep, or dull quietness; there is rest also in harmonious action.

"Rest is not quitting the busy career,
Rest is the fitting of self to its sphere,
'Tis the brook's motion
Clear without strife,
Fleeing to ocean
After its life,
'Tis loving and serving
The highest and best,
'Tis onward unswerving,
And that is true rest."

There is a restlessness in human life such that we are sometimes tempted to believe that "Man never is, but always to be blest." We have had our interests, moments of blessedness, times of sweet satisfaction; but as soon as we yield to the temptation to regard these as permanent possessions, final achievements, they slip away from us. They come not back in the same shape, we must find them in a higher form or lose them forever. "More life and fuller" is our constant cry, and yet with all our feverish restlessness we have a longing for some definite and final thing, that we can grasp and sit down to enjoy, with a feeling that the problem is solved and the duty done. We grow weary in the pursuit of truth, we are tired of the constant attempt to adjust ourselves to new conditions. We wish to see the perfect picture and admire, in mystic rapture, the wonderful work that we have achieved.

But surely the converted man has gained peace and come to know the meaning of rest! Thus we speak in our shallow ignorance, making an end of that which is but a beginning, and regarding a living process as a stagnant condition. Here we have a man who will help us in this enquiry; his conversion was definite and decisive, and his life was one of unending toil and unceasing progress. He claims to be self-sufficient in the inward life, but he expressly disowns self-satisfaction. He can, with gentle irony, refer to those who make an idol of their own small perfection. Christ has laid hold of him, but that is not perfection, he

must lay hold of Christ. He has risen, through the death of the old self to a higher life, but that is not perfection. The meaning of that word "resurrection" is by no means fully explored. He has seen strange visions, fought fierce battles, and done daring deeds; but all these have gone to the making of a life that must be strenuously defended and carried to loftier heights.

This is the highest thought of the Christian life, that runs all through Paul's preaching, that is enforced by many a striking picture and many a passionate appeal. It is quite evident that in this he was true to the life and teaching of his Lord. It is easy to be earnest in a spasmodic fashion, flaming out now and then into fiery words and vigorous deeds; it is also easy to keep on in a steady routine; but to be really alive all round and all the time is a difficult matter; to maintain quickness of thought, responsiveness of feeling and hopefulness of spirit is not easy. In a sense we do live out the past, it is because of what it has been and what we have done that we are able to be what we are; but if we come to live upon it and trust in it we are on the way to stagnation and death. Paul's phrase is a picture of strenuous effort; he is forgetting the things that lie behind him, in his Christian experience, and with intense determination and definite aim stretching forward to the glorious completion and the crown of his career. We cannot in any stupid, literal sense forget the past, at least, we cannot do so without real loss, but in the true sense we can forget the

failures and successes of the past by keeping them in their proper place, so that they shall neither embitter nor enfeeble us, nor minister to a false pride. When the runner is nerving himself for the final effort, rushing swiftly yet steadily along "the homestretch," he is actually availing himself of all past discipline and giving it a meaning and application. The more satisfactory the course is that lies behind him, the less does he need to look back; the more a noble past has entered into him, the more does present effort prepare for future progress.

Paul's outlook into the future explains his view of the past. Where there is this straining eagerness, this constant movement, this confident hope, the past will be rightly treated; in so far as it is a dead past, it will be allowed to bury its dead; in so far as it is a living past, its threads will be gathered up and woven into new products of high emotion and noble purpose. The young man who has received a new revelation should scorn the thought of sitting down to worship the brightest things in his brief career. The man with a long and varied life behind him may perhaps be excused if he is tempted a little in this direction. He who knows our weakness will not judge him harshly. But we must fight against this tendency, as long as we can, and with forward look upon our face keep a childlike heart and cherish the hope of new visions from our God, that will keep alive our faith in the coming kingdom.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll,
Leave thy low-vaulted past,
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

PAUL'S VIEW OF CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION

CHAPTER XXII

PAUL'S VIEW OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

PHIL. III, 12-16.

In the first part of this chapter the Apostle has set forth the reality of his conversion and the depth of his own spiritual life. He now sketches briefly his view of Christian perfection. Paul's teaching on such a subject must be both interesting and important. It is a subject that has always exercised the thought of earnest disciples, and around it there have been many sharp controversies. Judging from the text, we conclude there were some at that time who claimed to have reached perfection, and ever since there have been disciples who have set up the same claim. Thus, it is not a mere matter of abstract theory, but an affair of real, living interest. The utterances of such a man on such a theme demand careful attention. He will not treat it in a cool speculative fashion, or handle it in a cynical mood; he has tender sympathy, large experience, well-balanced life. The spirit of God leads him to present large views of truth and saves him from the dominion of small conceits or narrow fads.

Paul, here as elsewhere, is positive and constructive in his method. He does not waste energy in refuting or ridiculing the opinions of

others, but rather communicates with clearness and dignity the truth he has received. It would have been quite easy for him to have denounced with sharp sarcasm and withering contempt the shallow pretenders to perfection. He, true to his character and mission, chose the more excellent way. He boldly presented the Christian life as an ever-growing, ever-enlarging experience, and alluded with the utmost brevity to the pretensions of self-styled perfect people. He gives us not abstract doctrines but personal experience; but in choosing this form of testimony he does not mean either to limit the grace of God, or to make his own life the measure of every man's experience. He would be the last man to discourage high aims or demand that every life should be moulded on the same stereotyped plan. It is dangerous to denounce "perfectionism" in such a way that men are led to lower the ideal of Christian life, and become content to render an easy compliance with the conventions of religious society, and the ceremonies of the Church. That kind of "moderatism" which is neither cold nor hot is a flat, helpless form of religion, neither acceptable to God nor serviceable to man. On the other hand, there is danger in the doctrine of perfection, as it is often set forth at revival meetings or Evangelistic services. In these presentations there is no doubt a mingling of truth and error, but we do not venture to make severe criticisms on that account as it is difficult to state any truth in a perfectly pure, symmetrical form. The real danger in these popular appeals is that

the very idea of perfection may be narrowed, thus lowering the standard instead of uplifting the soul. It is possible to think of perfection not as a full-orbed completeness of life and character, of thought feeling and conduct, but merely as an exalted state of emotion, a rapturous devotional mood, and this may easily become shallow and artificial. Dealing with a subject that is thus compassed with difficulties on either hand, Paul avoids the falsehood of extremes and goes to the heart of the matter.

He has pointed out clearly two subjects of his hope and desire. (1), that he might enter into full sympathy with the Saviour's sufferings and resurrection, and (2), that he might attain unto the resurrection from the dead and enjoy a blessed immortality. In other words he longed for a richer, sweeter experience here, and a glorious life hereafter.

Now he warns us against thinking that he claims to have reached the perfect life. He has vindicated the reality of his own conversion, he can speak of Jesus as his Saviour, and he cherishes a blessed hope of eternal life; but when he looks at himself in the light that streams from the Cross, it is the littleness and incompleteness of his life that seems most real and striking. The great things he has received are regarded as a promise and foretaste of deeper experience and richer revelations. This leads him to say, "I have not yet grasped the prize, I am not yet perfected, the supreme thing with me is not what I am but what I hope to be through the grace of God and the love of Christ." The

reality of Paul's conversion is seen in this, that it is the beginning of a new life, the starting point of a noble career. A spurious conversion ends in stagnation or re-action, and those who pass through it, are worse, not better than before. They were anxious, restless, striving after real purity and deep peace, but now after a false excitement they fall into a dreary routine. Paul's conversion was a deliverance from a system that promised perfection as a reward of strict obedience to an almost infinite number of external commands. It was not an easy form of religious discipline, it demanded from its devotees intense concentration and unrelaxing perseverance. But the perfection that it gave could not satisfy a great hungry soul. In the Christian life Paul found constant movement, real growth, steady advancement. There was the deepest satisfaction but at the same time a healthy restlessness. The very faith that gives real joy is also the power that reaches forward and anticipates the possession of a still greater prize.

Thus Paul represents the Christian life as a strenuous endeavor after a great prize, a pure reward, a supreme satisfaction. But it is the striving of a man who has in a certain measure found that for which he seeks. "Jesus Christ has laid hold of me, and I am seeking to lay hold of Him. He has lifted me out of the grave of my old life and I am seeking to rise into full sympathy with His redeeming purposes." Here we have the explanation of the fact that the Christian disciple cannot call himself perfect, and yet cannot cease

from praying and struggling after perfection. To be perfect for Paul means to be mature, that is, Christ-like; he has the spirit of Christ but has not yet attained the full measure of its manifestation. It is the largeness of his faith, the sanity of his judgment, the sweep of his imagination that leads him to disclaim perfection, so far as he himself is concerned. He bears testimony to the actual facts of his own life, and so pays the most effective tribute to the power and perfection of the Christ.

Just as strongly as he disclaims perfection does he claim to possess the highest aspiration. "This one thing I do," indicates loftiness of aim and constancy of purpose. His whole life is absorbed in the real search for perfection, and he knows how to seek it, not in his own raptures, but in his communion with God and his service of men. This gives unity to his life, makes it the same thing in all times and places. This supreme purpose controls all the details of his life and subordinates its varied activities to one glorious end. In his preaching and suffering, in the whole round of his many-sided ministry, there was manifest this one purpose to attain a strong mature Christian life. It may be well to ask whether our life possesses any such noble clearness, constancy, and consistency.

Paul treats this aim of his life on its two sides, in its relation to the past and to the future. It is a forgetting of the past, a leaving of that which is behind. We owe much to the past; its results for good or evil are gathered into the living present; its victories have given us strength, its defeats have

left scars upon our souls. It is not possible literally and absolutely to forget the past, neither is it desirable. The man who, because of his wretchedness, prayed for the power to forget all the past, discovered when his prayer was granted, that he had lost more than he had gained, and that a better prayer would have been, "Lord, keep my memory green." But it is possible to cling to the past in a way that weakens our present power and hinders our real progress. In the individual life, as well as in the Church, we must beware of having a religion that is history and nothing more. The man who has had a startling conversion may be tempted to live too much in the past, and to think that his wonderful experience is for himself the beginning and the end, and for others the type and pattern of all life. Paul could point to such a conversion, and on more than one occasion he makes effective use of his testimony, but he is on his guard against the temptation to become a backward-looking man. If a man's life is shallow, poor and helpless, people do not care about the day and hour of his conversion; his sensational attempts to call attention to it only drive them to the conclusion that he needs to be converted again in a more living fashion. The past is good enough to learn from, but not rich enough to live upon. Our salvation is still in the future, our golden days are still to come. Paul's present message is: forget past failures, brooding over them will only make you weak. Forget past sorrows, remember only the abiding blessings from all the gracious discipline. Forget past blessings in the faith that large mercies

are still in store. Forget past successes in your determination to do greater things in the cause of Christ. This forgetfulness of the past is not in the spirit of cynical unbelief or bitter disappointment; it is simply the grand affirmation of faith that the kingdom of God has always new revelations for the seeking soul.

Paul here uses the familiar figure of the race. He thinks of a man speeding along the course with his eye fixed on the goal, and so intent upon winning the prize that he has neither time nor inclination to look back. The trained athlete straining every nerve, putting forth all his powers for a definite purpose—that was for Paul a favourite picture of the Christian life. This does not mean an easy life, but one that is strenuous in the fullest sense. Distinction and usefulness are not gained by idle dreaming. The athlete who wishes to maintain his place must continue to exercise self-denial, and keep all his bodily powers in subjection. The young student must not depend on sudden spurts, or pride himself on past rapid attainments, but must constantly study the subject to which he will devote his life. In the same way the Christian life calls for daily consecration and continual service. The disciple must keep his eye fixed upon the prize of the heavenly calling and press forward with unceasing unswerving efforts. We sometimes sigh because of the constant pressure, and wish that the great problems of life could be settled by one definite round of ceremonies, or a few sensational meetings, but our sighs cannot change the stern reality. Life is a constant

struggle, each new day bringing new problems, and the reward of living faithfully to-day being the power to brace ourselves manfully for the new battles of to-morrow. There is in this view of life a hope and dignity if not ease. Our life may be a heavenly calling instead of a sinful slavery, or earthly drudgery. It has its goal and its prize. We need not beat the air and spend our strength for naught. The prize is worth fighting for. The struggle of life is its own reward. Such a view of life hindered Paul from being content with any small present perfection. He therefore invites those who have attained some real strength, and are tempted to regard themselves as perfect, to take this living thought of life. Let them think of life as a race or battle which calls for constant endeavour until its final hour. In the presence of God's high demands an important point of perfection is to know our imperfection; the man who has achieved most, is the man who feels most bitterly the insufficiency of his attainments. To the "perfect people" Paul says, take your little perfection and cast it behind you, and press forward into a larger world of thought and life.

Paul teaches us further to distrust the perfection which separates us from our fellow Christians and tempts us to say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." When men would introduce a new division into the Church distinguishing between the perfect and the imperfect, the initiated and uninitiated, the receivers of the first blessing and the possessors of the "second blessing," it is time to point out that such divisions are superficial,

and may be dangerous. One man may be farther on the way than another, but this difference of degree is not to be made the basis for setting up different castes within the Church. Seeing that we hope in the same God our Father, the same Jesus our Saviour and Teacher, the same Holy Spirit our Comforter, let us work by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Many a lowly soul that has never dreamed of perfection is near to God in purity of spirit and faithfulness of service. Some who have reached perfection need to learn that their perfection is a poor empty thing. What we all need is more of the life of heaven, the life that brings clearer insight, richer love, and fuller strength. Let us be thankful if we have received great blessing, and have been brought in peace through many stages of our journey, but let us rejoice that we are still called to go from strength to strength till we appear in Zion before our God.

PAUL'S SORROW OVER THE PERVERSION
OF TRUTH AND THE DEGRADATION OF
LIFE

CHAPTER XXIII

PAUL'S SORROW OVER THE PERVERSION OF TRUTH AND THE DEGRADATION OF LIFE

PHIL. III, 17-19.

This man looked the most terrible facts of life full in the face and yet did not lose heart; as we take our stand at his point of view we see the difficulty and danger of life. Temptations beset us on every hand in the sphere of thought and the domain of action. We are in danger of scepticism through much thinking, of narrowness through zeal for religion, and of looseness in our search for liberty. There is still another danger, that of thinking that it is all a vain struggle and that there is nothing better than to drift aimlessly through life's uncertain journey. If that practical scepticism conquers us in youth it will lead us into ways of wickedness and misery; if we yield to it in later life it will make us cynical and despairing. This despondency begets the spiritual weakness which makes one a coward in the face of life's high demands. The man who wrote these tragic words had surrendered himself to Jesus Christ with such stern resolve and true devotion that he welcomed "the strenuous life" as a divinely appointed discipline by which he was to reach the full measure of Christian man-

hood. Paul earned the right to criticise, and acquired the power to counsel by facing so bravely in the spirit of faith and reverence, the hard battle of life. Having cast aside his external grounds of boasting, and having by the power of love made clear choice of Christ, he has proved the capacity of this supreme love to inspire and sustain.* His zeal and fervour are shown by the fact that he does not rest in the past, but is ever reaching forth to larger experience and richer knowledge. In this spirit he can say, "Be ye imitators together of me." This exhortation and the form of it are quite in harmony with sincere humility. Humility is not blindness. A strong man must see clearly the meaning and power of his own life. Humility is not mock modesty angling for compliments. Humility is doing all our own work in the spirit of dependence on "Our Father." It is good when a man can say, "Follow my example in so far as it helps you to a fuller following of Christ." Such a man does not claim to have a monopoly of Christian life. He urges the disciples to pay attention to those who are typical Christians, those who embody in lowly lives the lofty doctrine. The cynic finds out the poorest specimens, the disappointing "professors," and gloats with malicious glee over them. That is a small business. Since there is so much that is sad and painful that we must see, let us, when we have the chance, feast our eyes and rejoice our hearts with a noble type of Christian manhood. Let us review the noble company of Christian believers we have known,

*See Chapter XIX.

and set the largeness of the Church against any local littleness and meanness.

Paul would have us interpret his doctrine by his life. Some said that his doctrine was loose and dangerous, but his life was the best answer to that slander. He did not ask that men should follow him mechanically, repeating his exact words. Our word "mimicking," may be connected with the word he used, but that low kind of imitation was not the thing he meant. He had a perfect right to claim that his teaching should be read in the light of his conduct and that if men would judge his life they must take the spirit and the whole of it. Those who possessed the same passionate love for Christ, and the same spirit of self-denial could never make the mistake of confounding Christian liberty with pagan looseness.

No man felt a deeper sorrow over those who perverted the truth and degraded themselves. When thinking of those who were strenuously striving after goodness and cheerfully suffering in the cause of Christ, he was compelled to face the solemn contrast and remember those who were walking the downward path. If there were any who professed to find an excuse in his teaching, that made his sorrow all the more bitter. He had spoken of these things before, he must speak of them now with tears in his eyes, and tears in his soul. He was not a maudlin person, a professional weeper, or a feeble despondent creature, ready for tears on any trifling occasion. He was a strong all-round man of rich emotions and

varied moods. He could manifest stern indignation against narrow bigots, but when he thought of men who, through folly, were destroying their own lives, he was stricken at the heart, and words could not express his pain; in his grief and pity he was crucified with Christ.

Paul must continue to preach the Gospel of free grace and the power of the inward life, and he must protest against misunderstanding, but he felt that there was a kind of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that called for tears rather than arguments, and that in such a case, the final word was, "If our God is hid, it is to them who are perishing," to them who by a wicked life are destroying any spiritual insight they may have possessed. We can have Christian liberty only if we have Christian life. From Paul's point of view it could never be the highest thing to live by petty rules and walk by the detailed discipline of external authority. From such a life he had been delivered by the power of love. But for men to talk of "enlightenment" and walk in darkness was to him a glaring contradiction and inconsistency. To be an "advanced thinker," smiling contemptuously at the scruples of "weak brethren," and yet to be destitute of inward power and spiritual constraint was a shameful condition. This was to be the enemy of the cross of Christ, to sin against light and love. The cross of Christ means hatred of sin and love for sinful men, righteousness and gentleness, self-sacrifice and service. Those who pervert the meaning of the Gospel message are justly called "enemies of the cross of

Christ." Paul in four striking phrases writes the character and fate of such men in letters of fire.

Their end is destruction. Destruction does not mean literal death or passing to mere nothingness, but rather the deterioration of men who are treading a downward course along which there is no hope of salvation, because they have quenched the true light and are following false lights which lead astray. The present life seems to be full of attractions, with its artificial glamour and feverish excitement, but its course is downward towards death and hell. "Perishing" is not necessarily a sudden tragic process, but may be slow and imperceptible to those who are blinded by the passing shows of earth. To the man who, in spite of misleading appearances, can catch the hidden drift of things, the end is sure.

For they have degraded life. There is in men the possibility of the angel or the devil, and they have deliberately chosen the lower. It is a slander on the lowest creatures to call their life "brutish," for the brute on its own plane lives a regular, natural life; but the wicked man breaks through social restraints, and despises the law of his highest being; even the coarse, stupid man who has never been awakened to life's high possibilities is not so vile as the refined sensualist who is polished on the surface but corrupt within. We need not attempt detailed pictures of the filthiness hinted at in this strong word; the less, indeed, we know of it, and the more we shrink from it, the better. Paul did not delight in such language, it was extorted from him. It is a stern rebuke

to those who have allowed sensuality to blind them to the attractiveness of the Gospel and the beauty of the spiritual life.

They glory in their shame. This is surely the deepest depth of degradation. If the case is not utterly hopeless it will at least demand a miracle of grace. The degraded man who is tormented by conscience and realizes his bankrupt condition may arise and turn his face towards his Father's home. There is hope where there is any sense of shame and need of repentance, but when men boast of evil as good, and zealously propagate it, then they must be fought down even fiercely in the name of Christ. It is a tremendous tribute to the healthful life of the Christian Church that it has the power to cast out such moral leprosy, and go forth into a fuller light glorying in the purity and gentleness of Jesus.

They mind earthly things. It is not an anti-climax. It really gives in sober words the summing up of what has gone before. The prophet who has had the vision of the unseen, eternal kingdom, weeps over those who have chosen the dust as their destiny. The dust belongs to the body of our humiliation, but in this case, it has eaten its way into the soul. Food and drink, the truths of religion, the beauties of nature and art,—these are to be to the spiritual-minded man forms of the Father's gracious bounty; to the sensualist they have all turned to dust and ashes. This is the greatest tragedy of all, when a man, who might be a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, becomes completely a creature of the dust.

THE HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

(III. 20, 21)

These two verses are rich and suggestive, and stand in strong contrast to the words that have gone before. There are those who mind earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven. Sternly and tenderly does the Apostle speak of those "who mind earthly things." In one sense we must all mind earthly things, and mind them very much. He would not, however, condemn the thoughtful care for common things; he is thinking of those who through earthly lusts and lawless passions destroy the power of the spirit, and reduce the noblest things to dust and ashes. When Paul thinks of those who have chosen such a ruinous course, such a perishing portion, it is with deep distress of soul that he is driven by the sharp contrast to say, "But our citizenship is in heaven." He sees the strong light and the deep shades in this picture of human life, the precious inheritance of those who are spiritually minded and the tragic fate of those who seek in perishing things that which God alone can give. The word "conversation" does not, in its present narrow sense, express the fulness of Paul's meaning. The word that he uses is a form of the Greek root from which we

derive such words as polity and politics (cf. I, 27). Hence, the reference is to the whole spirit and purpose of one's life. He had been speaking of those who were in the lowest and saddest sense citizens of the earth; those whose desires, hopes, and aspirations were completely centered on the world's enjoyments and prizes. Perhaps it would be a misnomer to speak of them as "citizens" at all, for the man who lives simply for selfish gain and personal pleasure is not a member of any community. As opposed to them, the claim is made for the Christian disciple that he acts as a citizen in the spirit of the Gospel, and that his look is upward to the eternal city and the divine King. At that time there were many who claimed to be cosmopolitan, that is citizens of the world, in that they possessed a culture, and believed in principles, that were not bounded by the limits of any city or nation. Patriotism, they said, is good but the life of humanity is larger than any local creed or national policy. There was truth in that, but in practice it was often shown that fine sentiment of this broad kind did not exert much power in checking caste prejudice and national narrowness. The great missionary had sympathy with anything that broke down barriers that separated men, but he sought to do this by making them citizens of heaven. He makes for the disciples of Jesus Christ a great claim, and professes in their name a lofty faith, saying, "We are citizens of a spiritual kingdom into which there is an immediate entrance, and for which God will prepare an abiding city."

In those days the sense of nationality was strong; but patriotism was well tinged with prejudice. Jews, Greeks, and Romans had each a strong, distinctive life that had been formed by centuries of struggle and discipline. They exalted their own special gift, and looked upon outsiders as barbarians. Yet, as a matter of fact, they influenced each other, and abiding forces from all of them have come down and helped to form the highest life of Christian nations. These kingdoms, though exclusive, were not absolutely closed to an outsider; a man might become a Jew in religion, a Greek in philosophy, a Roman in politics. Men prized highly the citizenship of these different realms. Paul himself enjoyed something of the advantage of all of them. His presence at Rome appealing to Cæsar's tribunal is due to the fact that he could say, "I am a Roman citizen." Though not deeply versed in Greek philosophy he used the noble language which had been its medium, and was to some extent affected by its modes of thought. His Christian discipleship had made him still more fully the heir of all that was best in Hebrew religion; he had served it in the letter with legal precision, and was now loyal to its real spirit. Paul did not despise that which was really great in any of these kingdoms, he knew that through each of them God had given a contribution to the highest life of the world, but he had a vision of something grander and more universal than any of them; he had faith in the spiritual kingdom of God where Jesus is Saviour and Lord. Some denounce this faith as "other-worldliness" and

condemn it as a mystical, mischievous fancy. But Paul the idealist, the man of faith, has done more even for this world than many "practical politicians." We are shallow and short-sighted when we regard faith in the unseen as opposed to the highest interests of the present life. The most useful citizens of any kingdom are those who believe in a kingdom that is not meat or drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The man who is a citizen of heaven will, in proportion to the reality of his faith, display the qualities of honesty and righteousness that are needed everywhere.

LOOKING FOR THE KING

"From whence also we expect the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory." When Paul speaks of a commonwealth he naturally thinks of the King; the kingdom to him is not an abstract conception, it is the realm in which Jesus Christ exercises sway. The thought however that he here emphasizes is that the rightful King is also the Saviour who acquires the right to rule the soul through the new life that He has quickened. Loyalty must be rooted in love, love must be kept pure by reverence. Salvation is the growth of new manhood under the inspiration of loyalty to the king. This fits a man for citizenship in the new kingdom.

Salvation is both present and future; we have a Saviour and we wait for the Saviour. No one

was less disposed for idle waiting than Paul; he would not reduce religion to a memory of the past, or a fancy for the future; but the fact that it is a present experience does not exhaust its meaning. He is constantly laying stress on the future significance of salvation, a future growing out of the present as its completion and crown. (I, 6).

The contrast between present and future suggests another striking contrast. Though our citizenship is in heaven, we must still pursue the life of lowliness and limitation on earth. There are many difficulties connected with this subject which we cannot completely settle, but lying behind the Apostle's statement there are great truths which we may appropriate. (1) The Christian religion comes to redeem the whole man. The more our knowledge grows, the more do we realize the close relationship of body and soul; the redeemed life will surely prove and illustrate more fully this great truth. (2) "Vile body" is an unfortunate translation; the body is not necessarily vile, it can only be rightly so-called when it is the victim of perversion or degradation. It is the "human form divine," wonderful, considered as a machine; still more marvellous as the companion and servant of the spirit, capable of expressing the noblest beauty. (3). It is "the body of our humiliation." It limits and hinders us. Weak men are enslaved by bodily appetites. Good men are checked and thwarted by its feebleness. Paul himself shows how largely faith can even now triumph over such weakness, and make the frail body an instrument of high purposes.

(4), Hence it has a high destiny. The Christian disciple must become in all things like his Lord. The body must be transformed by spiritual influences, so as to be conformed to the body of his glory according to the working of that power by which he can subdue all things to himself.

What a noble tribute to the power of Christ! He saves His disciples from the coarse attractions of the earth. He enfranchises them, making them citizens of the Kingdom of grace and glory. He will transform their whole nature, bringing every faculty into harmony with new conditions and higher society. If we have such faith in Jesus, it will uplift our whole life and make every sphere of our activity pure and sacred.

THE CALL TO UNION AND MUTUAL
HELPFULNESS

CHAPTER XXV

THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS

(IV. 1)

This exuberance of expression is not common with Paul, we do not find it, to the same extent, in any other epistle and yet, under the circumstances, it seems to be quite in accord with what we know concerning a man who was rich in emotional endowment as in intellectual equipment. This "beloved," occurring twice in one verse, and the striking word "longed for" are not common courtesies or conventional forms of politeness, but the strong words of a strong man who meant all that he said; such words would only be used to express the most tender affection and intense desire. We are often compelled to admire in these writings the splendid combination of intellectual breadth with deep feeling and practical wisdom.

His logic always leaps into life, his exhortation gains weight and force from the magnificent presentation of truth that lies behind it (cf. Rom. XII, I Cor. XV. 5, 8). "Wherefore," "so that," connects the tender exhortation with the passionate polemic and lofty teaching that has gone before; this is logic, but logic throbbing with the pulse of life, and warmed by the fire of love. Here head

and heart are not at war; piety receives its true enlightenment, and reason its real, persuasive power. The call to steadfastness is not a new thing; it is a constant need that will bear repeated appeal and varied illustration. The classic passage on this subject is a parable of real beauty and undying power, which has steadied many a wavering soldier, and helped him to turn defeat into victory (Eph. VI, 13-17). Paul knew well enough the downward pull and the backward strain; he never for one moment suggests that the Christian life is an easy experience, all his illustrations speak of steady toil, severe conflict and unceasing movement. Hence "stand fast" does not simply mean, maintain your present position: it may express the thought of resistance, to stand so as not to fall, stand so as not to be driven back. But the position held must be made a stepping stone to something higher; when the severe strain slackens, we march forward towards the goal that is kept continually in view. We may regard this Christian steadfastness, then, as the disciple's constant and the teacher's supreme satisfaction.

THE DISCIPLE'S NEED

Of these disciples of the new faith it was true that they needed to listen devoutly and intelligently to this call to "stand fast in the Lord," to remain close to Jesus, to continue in communion with Him. The healthy body breathing a pure air has great power of resistance; it is constantly throwing off impurities and resisting insidious attacks. Thus the faithful disciple, moving in the atmos-

phere that Jesus creates around the soul, has power to resist the forces that make for the lower standard of life. Standing then in this sense means living. The phrase "in the Lord," Paul's own peculiar form of speech, gives meaning and hope to the exhortation. Nothing but this living personal influence could strengthen men to resist the force of old habits, the customs of an alien society, the sharp criticism and fierce persecution of bitter opponents.

We are all inclined, at times, to cherish a longing for an easier way, to float with the tide, to yield to the subtle influence of the common atmosphere, to bow to the power of the past. The strenuous movement, the unresting energy of a man like Paul, startles the ordinary man into almost hopeless admiration and surprise. With him "the expulsive power of a new affection" seems to be so real and vehement that the temptations to sensuous pleasure, or religious routine seem to be left far behind. He was torn by an over-mastering vision, a revolutionary revelation from the "beggarly elements" that had enthralled, but never satisfied his soul. But he knew all that the struggle of life meant for the disciples, and he yearned over them with a father's thoughtful, tender care. Hence he says, "Be true to your principles, loyal to your Lord, cultivate your peculiar positive life."

The seductions of worldly pleasure were as real then as now, the false glitter and bewitching allurements seemed sometimes well suited to distract the jaded mind. "The earthly things"

assumed a form behind which the coarseness and corruptness was hidden. To be peculiar, to despise things that won the applause and approval of the crowd,—this called for clear conviction and strength of character. The heavenly citizenship, beautiful as an ideal, was a thing requiring delicate discrimination and resolute determination in daily life. It would be a poor thing to call upon weak untrained men to play the heroic part unless they could be brought to see that "in the Lord" there was a rich power that would hold, inspire, and satisfy them, when once they made the venture of faith.

Outworn systems may have their day and cease to be, but they are not dethroned without a struggle. Great systems that have been deeply rooted, and for which men have given their lives, do not easily lose their place or pass away. The dogmas they have created and the institutions they have built possess great power by their very definiteness and visibility. The new higher life seems sometimes so thin, hazy, and unreal. The ideas, which, when once they are firmly held, show power to change society and to turn into new channels the currents of the world's life, are at first far-off visions of glory to men just rescued from the doomed religions and dying creeds. The first need is to continue steadfast in the Lord, to recognize in darkest days and testing times that in Jesus all that was true and eternal in the old is lifted up to larger forms and filled with a new radiant life.

THE TEACHER'S SUPREME SATISFACTION

What could be a nobler task for any teacher than to lead men thus from trembling childhood to strong manhood? The teacher sees the disciples in an ideal light, as the enthusiastic gardener sees the perfect flower in the struggling plant. There is no effective teaching without this living interest in men. Paul's "joy and crown" was not in prizes gained on account of his learning, not in splendid churches built, not in brilliant sermons published, but in men and women scattered throughout the world who had been brought from heathen darkness to the light of the glorious Gospel. In quiet days we are in danger of finding our supreme interest in ideas, schemes of thought, systems of theology rather than in men and women who are fighting the everlasting battle against scepticism, materialism, and conventional routine. It is a sign of true greatness to find one's joys outside of the narrow circle of self in the life of common, apparently uninteresting people. It is possible to utter great swelling words about "the service of humanity" and yet to be destitute of this quick tender sympathy. It is a proof of a noble nature to contend for a worthy crown, an unfading wreath. This is the crown of the victor, not the diadem of the king. On His head are many crowns, but to each faithful follower, each true teacher there is given an appropriate crown. God grants us grace to choose and make our own crown. Because these disciples are Paul's joy and crown they will be such; the love that sees the vision helps to make it real (John I, 42). This brooding

love is prophetic and creative. Words, which, when unreal, form the most repellent kind of cant are, when fresh and living, full of encouragement and inspiration. How many drift away towards feebleness and failure because they have no assurance that to some one they are "beloved." God seems to be silent and they cry, "No man cares for my soul." It is Paul's joy and crown that he helped men to cherish a lofty thought of God, that he brought near to them the tenderness of the Christ, that he made the Cross stand for all that is true and worth striving for; and in doing this he helped forward the higher life of the world. He has taught us that through the lowly service we advance the kingdom of truth more than by large pretentious claims. The epistles remain, and we find the key to their deepest meaning in our effort to come into touch with the lives of simple people who, like ourselves, have suffered pain, shed tears, and poured out prayers as they struggled amid sordid surroundings to respond to the quickening bracing call, "Be steadfast in the Lord."

THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN
STEADFASTNESS

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CALL TO UNION AND MUTUAL HELPFULNESS

(IV, 2, 4)

Here are the names of three persons—perhaps of four—as some read Synzygus instead of yoke-fellow, and all we know of them is that they were Christian disciples at Philippi more than eighteen centuries ago. The attempt to turn all these names into symbols comes from fanciful allegorizing which dissolves history into thin air. We are convinced that these names stand for actual men and women who trod the solid earth, and knew the real experience of life, both of its lofty aims and its petty misunderstandings. They were once very much alive on this earthly scene, and as they looked with changeable feelings out upon the world's battle-field, they cherished high hopes in the name of Christ; and yet, they were in danger from the smallness of personal feeling, and the spirit of faction. As we know so little about the details of the outside life of these people, speculation has been busy, but it is baseless and profitless. Much more helpful is it to dwell upon what we do know. When we know that they were real disciples, helping to build up a new community and finding difficulty in reconciling con-

flicting claims and opposing feelings, we know something that brings them nearer to ourselves. We see a growing life contending with the usual hostile conditions; we learn that those churches in the early days were not perfect in their social life, and because things did not run along smoothly of themselves, the highest harmony was not reached without some one's self-sacrifice and silent pain. If we will think carefully upon what life really meant for such people, rescued from false debased forms of religion, fired with new enthusiasm and called upon to construct a new society upon a purely spiritual basis, then even these obscure names will possess a living interest. Standing there in their apparent obscurity, they will yield fruitful suggestions without the help of uncertain traditions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON PEOPLE

The saying that the history of the world is the story of the lives of the great men is only a half-truth. The story of such lives has to be taken to mean the picture of the whole period, including the careers of those who helped them, and were influenced by them. The great men in this sense are the men who have a genius for generalship, who can see a value and power in all kinds of men. Paul mentions a few who were probably bearing a large burden in that particular congregation, but there were other "faithful labourers" whose names, if unrecorded, are written in the book of life. No prophet could have done a great work

had he stood absolutely alone; in the darkest hours God appointed some lowly companions, some sympathetic souls. In the few who gathered round Jesus of Nazareth, the critical eye would have seen only "common people," but when they had been the subjects of patient teaching and loving care, they exercised an uncommon influence. Cromwell and Napoleon could not have wielded such tremendous power if there had not been millions of "common people" capable of sharing their aims and ambitions, their loves and hatreds. According to some, Paul wrote many wonderful letters, and so moulded the life of the Church that he has been credited with "making Christianity." According to others he wrote no letters, but simply travelled and preached, and many followers gave their lives to promote the movement he had started, and sheltered their noblest thoughts under his great name. In any case, he could only have accomplished his great work by acting through a living medium, that medium being the many men and women who felt that the life he preached was a real life in which they could share, and from which they drew new energy. His own account was that he was a herald or ambassador of the king. His power came from the living Christ who stood behind him; his influence was carried forward by those to whom his message commended itself in the sight of God. These people Paul now calls to the highest life, namely, to put away their differences and work in harmony for the common

cause. This is one of the great problems to be solved by Christian faith and love, to banish petty jealousies and call forth the exercise of kindly consideration. To be at peace, and to exercise the office of a peace-maker—this requires patience and tact. To deepen differences and create factions is an easy thing. To do good work alone and in one's own way is not the most difficult matter; to stand outside and allow others to do the work may be both selfish and easy; but to conquer personal feeling and place in the background our own preferences for the sake of the common cause is the highest achievement.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

To a few women Paul preached when he first came to Philippi, and the gentle winning power of the Gospel touched their hearts. The influence of women is always powerful in the lowly home or in the palace, in the place of worship and service, or in the haunts of pleasure and shame. Woman owes much to the power of the Christian religion, and nobly has she sought to pay the debt. In spite of sarcasm and sneers, we rejoice in the motherly and sisterly influence that has been one of the real forces of the Christian Church. "These women" had noble forerunners and have been followed by an unbroken succession of faithful workers. They have sympathized with the leaders and teachers of the new community; they have ministered to the needy and wretched around them. The position of a woman in society may vary, but

the womanly nature is always the same and finds its sweetest satisfaction in modest service and indirect ministry.

Some features in the teaching of Paul with regard to woman find their explanation in the peculiar circumstances of his time. His great doctrine that in Jesus there is neither man nor woman but a new creature, has a meaning for all time. It is a doctrine of liberty not of license, a doctrine of liberty through obedience to the highest, holiest laws. New forms of activity may open up before the life of woman but she must find her highest joy in service. Her influence cannot be measured by the possession of political or public position. In most cases she exercises the unseen power which is gentle in nature, but high in quality. When we see that woman is capable of such intense self-surrender in common forms of life, we need not wonder that she is so eager in the search for the divine life, so quick to see the hidden mysteries, and capable of such unswerving loyalty to Christ and His cause. In training children, in stimulating men, in removing misery and soothing sorrow, her sacred powers have preserved their peculiar sovereignty. In loyalty through dark days and perseverance through persecution, they have shown how tenderness and strength may be beautifully blended. To lose her life and find it in another's success and joy is the woman's noblest satisfaction. She finds the lesson of the cross written upon her own heart, and when, instead of despising it as a

curse in the spirit of wild rebellion, she receives it as the God-given message, it lights the path of sorrow which leads to glory.

THE ABIDING RECORD

The men and women who are nameless and live in quiet corners are not forgotten and do not spend their lives in vain. The noblest literature, and the most helpful institutions have received rich contributions from many whose names are not recorded in any history of the nation, or calendar of the Church. But there is a "book of life" that treasures up the story of true heroism and faithful service. This is not some small local chronicle but the larger book of humanity. How many we have known who were strangers to publicity and fame, who showed patience in affliction, firmness in temptations, and sweetness in spite of disappointment! They helped us to believe in goodness, and caused us to feel the nearness of Christ; and we know that their names are in the "book of life." This is the book of the life of God; the volume that shows how the eternal love is ever repeating in lowly forms its wondrous story; not a completed and canonised Bible of the distant past, but the mysterious scroll which records the story of all true faithful lives. When we are weary of the world's small standards and fretted by foolish judgments, we find new courage in the thought that all true workers are enrolled in "the book of life."

WORSHIP AND LIFE

CHAPTER XXVII

WORSHIP AND LIFE

(IV, 4-7)

This passage is both an exhortation and a benediction; it shows Paul's desire for his disciples, and so suggests their duty. The apostle always brings his lofty teaching to bear upon the common life. He works from the nature of the Christ to the character of the Christian man, and from the inner life of the believing man to his outward conduct. The life of the true disciple is not, in this view, the result of mere external drill but the outcome of a divine energy which stirs the soul to its depths.

It may seem at first sight to be surprising that we are exhorted to be joyful. We must however note the form of the sentence "Rejoice *in the Lord* always, and again I say unto you, Rejoice." This qualification to rejoice in communion with the Lord gives the command its distinctive character. To men who, in addition to common cares and temptations, had to face fierce controversy and sharp persecution, Paul gives the command to rejoice.

To him this meant simply; be true to your Christian life, allow it to manifest its real nature and fulness of power; in more than one passage of

his writings it is evident that joy is only another name for life (II, Cor. I, 24). He did not regard religion as a slavish routine or as a melancholy brooding over sin and weakness. This life has a variety of moods and activities, public or private, social or solitary, but there must be a pulse of joy, a thrill of enthusiasm running through it all. The man who preaches to us this doctrine had more than his share of physical pain and mental perplexity, but for him this is the key-note of the Christian life, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." It is the word of faith, and means that under difficult circumstances, and in spite of hard times and conditions, the reverent man can possess a deep peace.

SWEET REASONABLENESS

Note the temper of this life, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." This word moderation may be misleading, it may send our thoughts off in a wrong direction. It furnishes another illustration of the fact that a great thought is difficult to carry over from one language to another. It does not refer to eating and drinking, there is no direct allusion to pleasures or indulgences, but rather to the spirit in which the Christian man moves about among his fellows. It means that which is suitable, fair, and equitable, kindness rather than justice, loyalty rather than legality. In one place it is translated gentleness. (II, Cor. X, 1, Acts XXIV, 4) From this it is clear that the point insisted upon is not so much

moderation in dealing with things as a "sweet reasonableness" in our intercourse with persons. We are inclined to demand all our dues of difference and courtesy while we forget that which others desire or deserve. Some go upon the very poor principle of drawing all they can out of society, and contributing as little as possible. Is it right for men to treat the Church in this way, and then wonder that they receive so little inspiration and light? The joy of Christ will cause a man to manifest a generous give-and-take in his commerce with society. Real faith in God begets reverence and kindness towards men.

"THE LORD IS AT HAND"

There can be no more appropriate watch-word for such a life than the short sentence, "The Lord is at hand." This may have suggested to his disciples the thought that the Christ would soon come to judgment, and it was possible for some to hold that view in a way that disturbed their life, instead of giving to it real stability. But the essence of the statement is that He is near and not afar off. If our faith really grasps this truth it will give us strength and steadfastness. We are not simply dealing with men; through our treatment of them we touch the throne of God. Jesus takes an interest in our life, and has a share in all its affairs. We wish to be kind and just in relation to Him; let us remember, then, that He constantly calls us to Christian charity and courtesy. This has another side; if the Lord is at

hand, we have protection against unjust criticism and unfair treatment; through this conviction these humble men were inspired to live heroic lives.

THE CONQUEST OF CARE

"Be not anxious at all, do not give away to fretfulness, be not distracted and worried by the cares of life." This reminds us of our Lord's counsel, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow." This is not a call to carelessness but to reverent, thoughtful trust. The careless man is most likely to fall a victim to the fretting care which weakens us more than work, shattering the nerves, distracting the mind, and leading to hopeless despondency. The small irritating cares wear the spirit more than high duties and heroic tasks. We brace ourselves for great efforts, seeking the blessing of God and the sympathy of men, and then in the hour of re-action we allow trifles to unnerve us. (I Kings xviii, xix.) This mood of weakness is a form of scepticism, a kind of practical unbelief which fails to realize that the Lord is always at hand. Nothing can conquer this corroding care except living faith in a present God. It is the highest exercise of faith to believe that God is near, taking charge of our life in its ordinary hours. We cannot avoid care, but we may meet it and conquer it by casting our care on the living God. God who guides the world and protects the Church will cherish and comfort the trustful soul.

THE INSPIRATION OF WORSHIP

Paul, never content with a merely negative statement always passes over to the positive power of the Christian life (Ephesians IV, 26). Care cannot be driven away by a mere command, but true worship can lift a man into a higher region from which he can return with renewed calmness and strength. Those who know the joy of of worship and sweetness of God's service wonder how men can bear the sorrows of this life without such sustenance. Worship is a power for every day, but it is also a great rest and refreshment one day in seven to shake off the common dust and breathe a purer atmosphere.

This means communion with God and through this communion a higher fellowship with our fellow-men. Nothing is more comely than this acknowledgment of our Creator and Redeemer, which takes us out of the narrow world of self into the large, free, eternal spaces. Without this our life is empty, and its outlook very narrow. To this inspiration the great promise is given, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

Here thanksgiving plays a noble part. All true thanksgiving has the note of joy in it. To express our thanksgiving sincerely is to make it more real. The man, who in spite of cares, sees many causes for thankfulness will through such insight gain a nobler strength. Another element in their worship is prayer in the strictest sense. We are to make our requests known to God with thanksgiving, believing that He can hear and

answer prayer. Even if our prayers have imperfection clinging to them, it is better to have imperfect prayers than a prayerless life.

“For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

It is good to join in common prayer, good also to bring our personal sacrifice. Let us be free in the presence of our Father, for He will not fling our own faltering prayers back into our face.

THE GIFT OF PEACE

This shall be the outcome of a childlike prayer. “The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and your thoughts in Jesus Christ.” This is God’s great gift to the trustful praying soul, calm peace, unutterable joy. This experience passeth understanding, because it is a matter of life, not logic. Like all the deep things of life it is incomprehensible, that is, it can only be known in and through itself. It is not passive quietness, the mere extinction of desire, since that would but abolish the problem and not solve it. The Christian religion quickens and satisfies pure desires, and gives us the activity of life without its fever and pain. This is the legacy left by Jesus to His disciples (John XIV., 27). He will lead us into the way of His Cross and impart to us the secret of His own blessedness. Peace with God through the sacrifice of Christ, peace with

self through our reconciliation with God, peace with men through the forgiving friendly spirit. The true guardian angel of the soul is the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

“Peace, perfect peace in this dark world of sin
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

A NOBLE CREED

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NOBLE CREED

(IV, 8, 9).

The last verse was a benediction, and might have served as a suitable conclusion of the epistle, but the apostle writes as if he were speaking. In imagination he sees before him the eager, attentive, hearers, and so real is this impression that he feels their attraction, and is compelled to add new words of gratitude and counsel. That style of writing or speaking may, in the case of a feeble man, degenerate into the utterance of wearisome platitudes, but when it is a manifestation of consecrated genius, the short vigorous sentences that spring forth bring new suggestions, and are felt to be all too few.

In Paul's letters the exhortations to thoughtful, steadfast goodness usually come last, or gain increased force at the close, not because they are unimportant items to be discussed in a few words at the end, nor on the other hand, because they form a beautiful climax and forcible application. The reason seems rather to be that in Paul's view you must lay the foundation, and then rear the building upon it. The ethical teaching grows out of the theology. We have first the religious teaching which is regarded as fundamental and vital,

and then there is sketched the life that is in harmony with such teaching. If a good, healthy root is planted in congenial soil, watered by the rain and warmed by the sun, there will, in due course, appear the appropriate blossoms and fruit. He presents in tender and loving forms the self-sacrificing love of Jesus, who, for our sake, made Himself of no reputation, and became in the richest and fullest sense our servant; and springing out of this manifestation of divine love in human form is the demand for loyal response and grateful self-surrender on our part. The man who has felt the quickening power of real faith must constantly bring himself to the test of real life, remembering that the sweet, mystic fellowship is the inspiration for strong character and a many-sided service.

RELIGION AND MORALITY

In days when life is simple, and men are not much given to speculation, there is no clear distinction drawn between religion and morality. It is implied that religion grasps the whole of life. In our time, there are those who make a deep separation between religion and morality, worship and conduct. We cannot now enter into the philosophy of this, but we must note the fact, that prophets and apostles refused to see any such distinction or countenance any such separation. Underlying the Ten Commandments, the fiery preaching of the prophets, and the earnest appeals of the apostles there is the same principle, namely this, that our duty to our fellow-men is based upon our duty to God, and that these are the two sides

of religion. There is always the danger of making religion a thing of ceremony, confining it to sacred days and special performances. Then it becomes merely a means of covering sin and bargaining for God's favour, a paltry piece of religious etiquette that has no living connection with the common cares and sorrows of life. No body of men ever fought more consistently and courageously against such a view than the Hebrew prophets, and our Lord, the highest of prophets, laid down His life in the struggle against ecclesiastical narrowness and bigotry. But, we need to guard against the other extreme, the sentimental scepticism that thinks that the highest goodness can flourish, and the noblest character grow, without any religious basis, or Christian inspiration. We must not make a fetish of our Church, or a superstition of our religion, but we must hold fast to the conviction that through the love revealed in the Christ we find nourishment for our souls, and stimulus towards real purity. No doubt "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small," but that is not a sweet sentiment of our own creation, but the heroic passion, the mighty power kindled at the Cross, and expressing itself in both worship and work.

CHRISTIAN IDEALS

Ideals are living, authoritative thoughts, noble aspirations, wholesome visions that lure men through difficult paths to higher duties. They come from God to uplift the life of faithful men. The worldly ideals are the possession of food and fine clothing, the control of money, the exercise of

power, the enjoyment of pleasure and popularity. The cynic tells us that these are the real things, and that so-called "higher things" are vain dreams, or if we like a finer name, mere poetry. In the presence of such cold, sceptical teaching we remember the great claim of our Master, "My kingdom is not of this world," and the penetrating question, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul"?

Reverence and Faith. Two of the great enemies to the spiritual life are scepticism and irreverence. A man may be in a healthful condition even when he is tormented by perplexities and haunted by doubts (Psalm LXXIII). So long as we believe that there is truth to be found and goodness to be revered, we are not hopeless though we may be unhappy. Two extremes had to be fought in Paul's day as in our own, the bigotry that claimed to have reached finality, and the scepticism that declared the search for truth to be in vain; the one hardened the mind and narrowed its vision, the other withered its energies and paralysed its action. Scepticism and irreverence denote two sides of the same blighting influence; if "we live" by admiration, hope, and love, true life is impossible where they do not prevail. The man who really appreciates and appropriates the teaching of Jesus Christ will have an open mind for all forms of truth. He who truly worships God will gladly pay homage to every worthy institution, man, or thing. The negative, critical attitude is not sufficient; the soul must respond to the inward spiritual impulse by going out to link itself with all noble forms of God-

given life. The essence of faith is truth-seeking, and the core of religion is worship, hence the Christian disciple must be alert for all that is true and honourable.

Strength and Breadth. The ideal of truth and honour above and around us must be embodied in personal life and conduct. Righteousness in deed, purity in thought; surely this is searching enough from the standpoint of morality. Is it a great demand that we should be straight and square in our dealings, and chaste down to the roots of our being? If the statement is not specific enough we can make it so in our application of it to our own case; and more, we must make it specific if we are determined followers of Jesus. There are things that are as well not named that must be fought. That which is mean and unjust, lawless and unclean, is essentially unchristian; if we have the spirit of the Christ we will spontaneously seek another atmosphere. Is not this enough? Can the strictest puritanism demand more? Yes, we must have purity without puritanism. Religion is social as well as solitary; it is the very same power of love that purifies the personal life and creates the noblest power of fellowship. There are also things lovely and endearing, things gracious and of good report. The beautiful, as well as the true and the good, comes within the range of Christian aspiration. The Christian man cannot be content with that which is just and honest merely in the legal sense; he will desire to cultivate loyalty and chivalry. Morality is not sufficient, nor even "morality touched with emotion." It is more than a mere

“touch,” it is that attractive, winsome, helpful grace which springs out of the very heart of Christian faith. Goodness need not always be stern and rude; it may be refined, gentle and courteous. The Christian may join the Hebrew strength and simplicity to Greek beauty and symmetry of life and character. Virtue is not a common word in the New Testament, occurring only here and in II. Peter 1 3, 5. But it was common in the great outside world, and Paul will not cast contempt upon it. It might be sometimes associated with unprofitable discussion, or shallow pride, but it was a noble word with a great history, and meant strength, self-reliance and self-control. So it has its place in the Christian life which finds its natural activity in social service. Virtue must not live apart but go hand in hand with praise; the strength of our own life will welcome praiseworthy companions from every quarter. If then, perchance, there be any virtue or praise in the society round about you, do not depreciate it, or lightly call it counterfeit: on the contrary, take note of it, reckon it as part of God’s kingdom, and of your possible possession.

THE THINGS TO BE COUNTED

“Think upon them.” That is good counsel, for a man’s life is very much influenced by the things to which he gives thoughtful meditation. Some translate, “Let such be your treasure”; which is a splendid thought, and very near to the original. There is a picture in the word, “reckon these things in”; as if a man should go round his estate making an inventory of his possessions. **A**

man may take stock of his business, and not enter in his books anything concerning his character, the confidence of his creditors, the faithfulness of his employees, and yet these are great things. He reckons cash paid and cash received, so many articles bought and sold, and so much profit on each. But there is another kind of reckoning, in which account is taken of things that bank-books and stock-books do not directly mention, such personal attainments and social virtues as have been set before us in this varied and beautiful list; these are the things which constitute the abiding wealth of the soul, and he who possesses them is rich toward God and useful to his fellow-men.

THE LIVING EPISTLES

These things are beautiful when set forth in persuasive forms of speech or writing, but their real power is seen in the lives of men who know the peace of God. Many of these disciples had little time to study books or work out theories of virtue; and besides, they were hampered by early prejudices and the evil customs of society. It was from the open book of a noble life that they read the eternal message, and received the new inspiration. The lives of faithful Christians revealed the real nature of the new faith, and led many to welcome it light. Paul could point to the things that they had heard and learned and seen in him. He did not claim to have reached perfection, or to have compassed all possible forms of goodness, but he could modestly declare that he had been a faithful teacher, and safe guide in the true

path of aspiration and progress. If his fellow-believers only have his spirit, they will not rely too much upon him, but will explore for themselves the great world to which he points the way.

But this leads us back to One who had constrained Paul by the power of love, and made all his acquisitions and capabilities available for the service of the Church. Paul could not have written in this fashion if he had not tried many experiments, learned many lessons and travelled on many paths, but in Jesus Christ he found the power that gave both rest and stimulus.* He was terribly in earnest, but he was not restless. He could say, "Do these things, and the God of peace shall be with you." The living water from which he drank is flowing for us, the sacred fire that kindled his enthusiasm is still the source of our cleansing and quenching; hence these triumphant words are also ours. These are glorious words to ring in our ears, through sickness and sorrow, through failure and triumph, through life and death—"the God of peace shall be with you."

*See Chapter XVII.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AS A CHRISTIAN
TEACHER

CHAPTER XXIX

THE APOSTLE PAUL AS A CHRISTIAN TEACHER

(IV, 8, 9)

The Christian religion is pre-eminently a teaching religion; its real nature is not shown in a definite moral code, a particular ritual, or an abstract theological system, but in that teaching which, growing out of the life of Jesus Christ, appeals in living forms to the mind, heart and conscience of men who are seeking the truth. It is not in vain that our Lord is called the Great Teacher; He proves himself to be this in the eyes of His disciples and the history of the world. If we ask the question, how is it that at the origin of Christianity a few courageous, simple-minded men accomplished such tremendous results, the answer is, because they were well taught. Jesus of Nazareth could speak with simple dignity and winsome power to the multitude so that "the common people heard Him gladly," but after His own life of self-sacrifice His great work was what has been appropriately called "the teaching of the Twelve." The men "who had been with Jesus" were so thoroughly taught that in the strength of their God-given convictions they could face the world and change the current of its life and history.

If we ask another equally pertinent question, how is it that so many people are at the present day carried away after foolish fads and fashions, the answer will lead us in the same direction. We have been passing through a period of great shaking and radical change, and those who are ill-furnished with intellectual and moral principles are not sure of anything. Hence many kind-hearted people are led to follow movements and believe things which imply that the human race in its long, toilsome experience has learned nothing, that all God's various forms of revelation have been in vain. This simply shows that our generation has not been well trained, and that while the "advanced men" and the "traditionalists" have fought their battles round every subject, a most important work has been neglected or only partially performed. If Christian disciples are to be strong, joyful, and influential, their minds must be nourished on true teaching.

Our Lord is the supreme example; in this, as in all else, his teaching is living, concrete, full-orbed. It almost defies analysis by its well-balanced symmetry and spiritual perfection. In the Apostle Paul we have not only the first great Christian missionary but also one of the noblest and most successful of Christian teachers. In one brief essay it is little that can be said as to his method and spirit, but that little may be put in a way that is suggestive.

Let us take a threefold view of Paul as a teacher. It may not be exhaustive, but so far as it goes it is, we believe, both true and helpful. In doing this

we shall venture to apply to the Apostle of the Gentiles words which are often used as terms of reproach. We admit that there may be reason in this, when they can be used separately, but at the same time we maintain that the reproach vanishes when they can all be applied to one man.

Paul was a moral teacher. We shall admit this if we have fathomed the meaning of one of his great sayings, namely this, "Let all things be done unto edification." At the present time we are told that the Christian Church has lost its moral power, that it makes men religious without making them good, and that "Ethical Societies" are needed to separate ethics from religion and inspire moral enthusiasm. If ethical societies can do any good, by all means let them do it, but we have little faith in a morality built upon agnosticism, and we feel sure that if we follow the example of Jesus and His apostles we shall not allow religion to be divorced from conduct. Of Paul we may say that he gave due prominence to moral character and noble conduct, but his ethics grew out of his theology. If we notice the plan upon which his epistles are built we see that, as a rule, he presents his great message concerning the relation of the soul to God and the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, and out of these grow his conception of the new life with its loyalty to God and its faithfulness to all human duties. Paul's morality springs from the Cross; it is rooted in the central Christian verities. It is therefore positive in its nature. We do not despise the ten commandments because they are

so largely negative; they are important, if elementary; they set needful limits to human lust and lawlessness. But mark the change and advance in these two utterances, "Thou shalt not steal"; "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands that he may give to him that needeth." What a magnificent sweep there is in Paul's demand for a positive moral life, the bringing into society through each believing soul of the life of Christ. This is a morality of principles, not of small rules. In an age of casuistry, of Rabbinic hair-splitting, Paul gave real moral principles which it required intelligence to apply, but which uplift us just in proportion as we make a strenuous effort to live them. "Let all things be done unto edifying" does not mean simply that we are to have pleasant, profitable, devotional meetings where we can speak sweet and comforting words to each other. They suggest the truth which Longfellow has put into simple, beautiful words.

"All are architects of Fate,
Working in these walls of Time;
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

"For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled:
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build."

If our young men grasped the truth that we are all character-builders working for eternity as well as time, they would have a living principle which would help them to solve many moral problems

and would stimulate their spiritual growth. Many small amusements and dangerous habits would be cast aside under the influence of this Christian thought. Paul in applying this truth remembered that no man liveth to himself, and the strong man, if he is a Christian disciple, will not in all things please himself. While we are not to be in bondage to "the weaker brother" we must consider his claims with delicate tact and in a spirit of tenderness. Thus, Paul's morality was individual in this, that it sprang from an inward principle of personal life, but it was social in that the individual was taught to think of himself as part of an organic whole. If the Church to-day can grasp the spirit of such teaching and face the world with Paul's robust faith, intelligent insight and living sympathy, she will show once more that she is the true "Ethical Society."

Paul was a Rationalist. If we consider the time when it was spoken, this was also a great utterance, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Very often sceptical and irreverent men have claimed to have a monopoly of "free-thinking." Paul would have been the last to admit such a preposterous claim; he proved that a man can think freely while he is receptive towards God's revelation and loyal to Christ. It is true that many regarded the Apostle as dangerous and destructive, but they were profoundly mistaken. He was the great constructive genius of his age. He believed thoroughly in the rights of the individual reason and conscience, while no one preached more powerfully the great truth

that we are members one of another. The Church could not rise to his high level, and soon after his time the Church, as a corporation, began to coerce and crush the individual life, and Church-leaders hankered after uniformity of outward life instead of unity of spirit. So there came a time when the Pauline exhortation, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" was foreign to the tone and temper of the Christian community. But the fact remains that Paul's ideal was the diversity of operations from the same spirit. He was not an "individualist" in any shallow atomistic sense, but to him the thought and conscience of the individual man were very precious. He would have men realize their highest life in and through a willing self-surrender and not by an unwilling slavery. Paul respected and honoured the claims of intellect even when he poured contempt on a perverse philosophy; and though he possessed a revelation he felt called to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It may be necessary to reprove "pride of intellect" as well as all other forms of pride, but this may be carried to an extreme, and we may create the impression that there is something essentially satanic and dangerous in intellectual activity. We may well learn from the life of Paul that honest thinking is just as pious as earnest praying, and that it is quite consistent with Christian humility to resist arrogant traditionalism and narrow dogmatism. It is important that religion should inspire noble conduct, but to do this it must satisfy intellectual needs. We must be as open

and as ready to receive new light and leading as Paul was in his day and if this is "rationalism" it is rationalism of the right healthful kind which will bring the true enlightenment and emancipation.

Paul was a Mystic. He believed in the inward life and light; he could say, "I live, yet not I; Christ liveth in me." He was a spiritualist in the true sense. There is a living spirit in man and therefore the capacity for communion with God, Christ in the heart, the hope of glory, the glory of harmony with God, and of realizing the true life. In our own generation we have seen a strong movement towards materialism. We have heard the leading men of science concede that there is something behind the brain, something that his science does not reach, and tell us patronizingly that if we like to call this something "soul" we can do so, but we must remember that we are talking "poetry." For ourselves we are not much concerned whether the form is poetic or prosaic so long as the substance is truth. Then again we have seen a fierce reaction from this materialism lead to a false mysticism. A man who has anything like the clearness and balance of Paul can observe these whirls and eddies of popular opinion without being carried away by them. Paul knew in whom he trusted. Jesus had laid hold on him with a firm grasp. To him the despised Jesus had become the key to the past, the inspiration of the present, and the hope of the future. He was not carried away by the changing winds of doctrine, or enticing lawlessness, because his

religion met all the needs of his full, rich nature. No side of his life was left unsatisfied and barren. Behind his thinking and acting there was the mystic force of a supreme love—"The love of Christ constraineth me"; that was a healthful force which gave noble rapture and abiding strength. While weaker men were going about boasting of their visions he showed himself to be the true mystic by living his visions.

It is because Paul was all of these things that he was each one in the right way. The moralist who separates conduct from truth and life is superficial; the rationalist who exalts the individual reason to the supreme place becomes irrational; the mystic who seeks rapture and visions for their own sakes will become "visionary" and helpless. But when all these sides of our complex God-given nature are met and satisfied, then we have a well-balanced man able to live the true life and to teach others. Such a man was Paul, and his well-balanced manhood is reflected in his teaching.

THE JOY OF GIVING AND RECEIVING

CHAPTER XXX

THE JOY OF GIVING AND RECEIVING

(IV, 10-20)

Paul closes this epistle with a personal acknowledgment, a warm expression of gratitude, and he does this in a way that shows how he can lift these matters of personal relationship to a lofty plane. In declaring our gratitude to God or man, it is easy to drop into empty, commonplace phrases. To Paul, however, this was not easy; he was always original, that is, he spoke always out of a fresh living experience. The Philippians, on their side, were a thoughtful, generous people. The gospel which they had received had been to them such a quickening, joy-inspiring power that they were anxious to shew keen appreciation by ministering to the man who had come to them as the messenger of God. The remarkable thing is that there was a real spiritual fellowship between them and Paul, so that he felt that he could receive gifts from them, even when he was compelled to decline them from others. Thus, in uttering his personal gratitude, he reveals an important side of his life. He is thankful for what they have done for him but he states this in a way that is likely to impress upon his disciples the great principle—which he had embodied in his own life, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

One outstanding feature of Paul's character is a strong sense of independence. Those who think that humility in the Christian man means a weak crawling condition will find no support for that error in the story of this man's life. He was a lowly, childlike man, bowing trustfully before God; he was also a brotherly man seeking to live in noble fellowship with others; he counted himself the servant of all, but he would not be the paid lackey of any man, or community of men. He must maintain a strong independent manhood if he was to do the work committed to him; if that was lost or crippled he could not be either an efficient minister of Christ or a true servant of men. The manner of his conversion, the peculiarity of his position, standing as he did outside the original circle of apostles, made him specially sensitive on this point.

Paul maintained that as a matter of right, the labourer is worthy of his hire, and the man who gives up time and strength to minister to his brethren is worthy of their generous, loyal support. If that was not true there would be nothing special in his conduct; the point is that he voluntarily refrained from his right, for reasons that some thought foolish but which to him were powerful and sufficient. He worked with his hands; he received private support from his friends that he might be unfettered, free to go wherever his large commission called him. This was certainly generous action on his part; but as even the noblest action will not please all, it was by some set down to wilful eccentricity or showy pride. In a cer-

tain sense Paul was proud, for there is a pride that is quite consistent with high Christian manhood. This passage shows that, under certain circumstances, he did accept gifts. He did not accept them as payment for his services, he did not consider that the highest spiritual ministry could in any real sense receive payment. A man can be supported, kept alive, a certain allowance can be made for the wear and tear of his life, but there is no price for a man's soul. The greatest poets, preachers and teachers have never received much of this world's coin in recognition of their services, and it is just as well, for wisdom and truth, sympathy and love are not marketable commodities. The highest salaries are not paid to men who do the noblest work but often to those who bewilder and mislead. When you look at Paul's work in the light of these nineteen centuries, do you think that any bank cheque could give a full and final payment for it? Paul judged it well to waive the just claim for support and limited himself to receiving gifts which were the real expression of sincere friendship. His feeling in such cases might be expressed in the words of Emerson:

"Gifts from one who loved me,
'Twas high time they came;
When he ceased to love me,
Time they stopped for shame."

Friendship of the highest kind is a difficult and delicate affair. Within a family there should be real family feeling, so that its members can give and receive help without any sense of dependence or shame. Even that is not always possible; but

how rare it is for two people to be on such terms of friendship that they can give and receive help without obligation or misunderstanding. This rare, noble fellowship existed between Paul and the Philippian disciples, and in this passage he reveals the spiritual basis of that relationship. The passage is highly suggestive, and it is well worth careful attention in order that we may note the character of the apostles' thought and catch the spirit of his teaching. He uses boldness of speech, the boldness that is the prerogative of the noblest strength and which is not to be confounded with the pretentiousness of ignorant presumption. He recognizes the generosity of the people, who had sent a messenger on the long toilsome journey to minister to him, during his imprisonment at Rome. This was spontaneous generosity; it was not a tax unwillingly paid but a free gift springing from gratitude and love. The thoughtful friendship that was behind it gave it strength, beauty, and acceptability. Paul accepted it gladly, and acknowledged it heartily; but the boldness of his speech consists in this, that he is able to declare that he rejoices in the gift not for his own sake but for theirs. He does not deny that he drew help, joy and satisfaction out of it; but he maintains that they who gave freely of their substance gained a great blessing through their generosity. In any case, he would have continued the struggle by God's help and carried on the great work; but if, in the presence of his affliction, they had remained neglectful and narrow, they would have missed a God-sent opportunity of holiest service. It is

possible for us now to see Paul's life through and through, and to understand the full meaning of its supreme struggle. We can see this life all the more clearly because many petty things that created misunderstanding and caused misinterpretation have fallen away. We know that it was a true life, without a wilful lie in it; we know that this statement was true both to his own feeling and the actual facts of the case. The gift had pleased and helped him, but the supreme blessing fell back upon the givers.

But how do we receive such tidings from the living voice? Suppose the Christian teacher courteously but courageously addresses a man of wealth in these terms; "God who has called me will care for me, He will feed and clothe me; He will also take care of the Church; in proportion to the divine life in her she will accomplish great things, whoever gives or whoever withholds; but I am concerned about you. If you shut yourself up in a small selfish world and have your soul strangled by miserable greed, you are bringing upon yourself a present damnation."

Such a speech can only be given by a man of unquestionable strength and sincerity. It is part of the living gospel and reveals the stewardship of life. It places a severe test upon the hearer; to the selfish, cynical man it may seem to be only a plausible form of begging, a clever attempt to capture his money for Church purposes. Paul ventures to take this high ground and maintain that his chief joy in the gifts sprang from his gladness over the spiritual fruitfulness, the self-

sacrifice manifested by those to whom he has ministered. In stating the reasons for this, he gives us a revelation of his own deepest life.

PAUL'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF

1. His self-sufficiency. He speaks not from the pressure of need, because he has learned in whatsoever circumstances he is placed to be self-sufficient. "Content" is too small a word to express Paul's real meaning. There is a shallow self-sufficiency which dispenses with God and despises the Christ. That was far from Paul's thought; he was never capable of anything so absurd. He tells us plainly that his power to do and bear all things is from Jesus Christ. This self-sufficiency has come to him through self-surrender. It is a popular misconception of the Christian religion to think of it as the impoverishment of self instead of the enrichment of the whole manhood. The rich, independent man is the man who has a world of his own, a faith in God, an interpretation of life, a sympathy with men, a hope for the future. The weakness of many people is that they have too little of this self-sufficiency, their happiness is too much dependent upon things outside of them; they hunger for more wealth, commercial prosperity, or social success. How can people who are always empty and restless inspire or guide others? Paul has gained the independence which comes through complete dependence on God. It was not carelessness or a naturally genial temper; it had come through many struggles and betokened victory over self. Not

in any academy or university had he acquired this noble self-sufficiency but in the arena of life and in the school of Christ.

2. Hence his power of adaptation to varied circumstances. It is quite legitimate to give a general application to this declaration of strength, "I have strength for all things through Christ that strengtheneth me," but it is well to note that Paul uses it here with reference to bearing the changes of life. It has always been recognized that the highest strength is needed in order to bear well violent changes of position. There are some people who have "come down in the world" and they are always whining, reminding others that they were once in better circumstances and have been cruelly treated. This unhealthy groaning soon becomes positively wearisome; it is the tone of people who were never far up in God's real world of light and love. Others there are who have gained wealth suddenly and have been driven to excess or drawn into arrogant, vulgar display. If we meet a man who has struggled nobly with poverty and carried himself modestly in days of success, we feel that such a man has true nobility of character. The real gentleman, the true Christian will bear poverty or riches without sordid meanness and without ostentatious pride.

Paul seems to have solved the secret of doing either with or without many things that are indispensable to others, so that he is not easily placed at the mercy of circumstances. This is a great secret, that of being full or empty, lacking or abounding. The ancient Stoic philosophers

claimed to front life in that bold fashion. With many of them it did not mean much; a few magnificent specimens like Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus stand out as lonely stars in a dark sky. In the days of Paul and by the power of his preaching the Christian religion created that spirit of independence and enthusiasm in the minds of thousands. It is not possible for the average minister, at the present day to have, in all respects, this absolute independence. It is good for him to have wife and family, home ties and social relationships, but he must be all the more careful to maintain his moral courage, intellectual independence and spiritual freedom.

3. Because Paul had before his mind the one purpose of leading men to Christ, and for the sake of this sacred purpose sought to keep himself free from all lesser entanglements—because of this he could truly say, “I seek not yours but you”; “Not that I seek a gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your account.” He was not storing for himself; but he wished to see his people becoming rich toward God. God has an account, a reckoning and Paul wishes the Philippians to have a balance on the right side. God’s account-book is not like the world’s banking account, it is a record of precious things that the world is apt to overlook and despise.

THE REAL CHARACTER OF NOBLE GIVING

Having revealed his own life, he now turns to the other side and shows how he regards generous Christian service.

1. It is a high form of fellowship. They communicated with him in his affliction, they entered into his life. Here we have a noble view of giving. It is not simply putting a coin on a plate, or flinging a crust carelessly to a beggar; it is entering into the life of a fellowman. This is a communion of saints, a sharing of each other's life. The rich men who have nobly helped heroic toilers and sympathised with struggling genius deserve our recognition and praise as benefactors of mankind. But this kind of fellowship is not confined to them, it is open in some measure, to all of us. We may emerge from the close, stifling atmosphere of self and enter into the life of a great human brotherhood. This is the Christian religion on one side, it is not a mere insurance for the future or a seeking of present raptures; it is an entrance into the life of humanity and the kingdom of God.

2. It is an acceptable sacrifice. The word for sacrifice here used referred originally to those sacrifices which involved the shedding of blood. But the blood is the symbol of life; and Paul would suggest that every exercise of real generosity is an outpouring of life. The shedding of blood is not our form of sacrifice to-day, but the pouring out of life is possible in many forms. Gifts to be really Christian must be seized by the spirit of love, lifted out of the realm of tax into the sphere of service. Giving is in danger of becoming formal and conventional; then it loses its sweetness and power. When giving is nobly done, it is a sweet sacrifice, acceptable to the eternal God. The life we share with our fellowmen may rise to heaven,

as an offering to our Father. Here we have the "enthusiasm of humanity" and the worship of divinity, the love of God and of the neighbor, which is the heart and essence of all religion.

3. It is a casting of seed into God's great harvest field. Not for reward shall they do this thing, but it shall not lose its reward; Paul's final benediction upon it is; "My God shall supply all your need." God will care for those who have cared for others. Not all our wants shall be supplied, for many of these are vain and foolish, but our real, deep needs He will supply. According to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, God will supply all their needs. What a tremendous measure! What promise of love, sympathy, and help! The power and abundance of God's glorious riches is on the side of those who trust in Him, and cherish the spirit of generosity. Your earthly plutocracy, what a wretched thing it is, breeding false ambition and baleful dishonesty. Government by riches that produce corruption is the worst form of government on earth. But let us think of what is meant by God's plutocracy, government by wealth of sympathy, peace and joy. If we covet earnestly the real riches, the riches that are in Christ Jesus, we shall learn both how to abound and how to suffer want; and we shall prove by personal experience that it is "better to give than to receive."

THE FINAL SALUTATION

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FINAL SALUTATION

(IV, 21, 23)

One more word of kindly greeting, one more expression of fellowship, one more noble prayer, these all woven into a graceful benediction—and Paul brings the brief letter to its final close. If we are at all responsive, the gratitude and hopefulness that thrill his soul find their way into our hearts. We have felt all through not only the genius and strength of the man, but also the freedom and individuality which have been quickened and enlarged by the power of Christ. Any kind of creed may narrow a man's mind if it is held too closely, any kind of party may enslave a man; the battle between outward coercion and inward life is ever present and unceasing. We are thankful, then, for every life which helps us to realize the meaning of the great saying, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The philosopher may be "persuaded that the personal relation to the visible church to-day has a value which concerns chiefly the man engaged in certain practical philanthropic tasks," and so advise his fellow-teachers to hold aloof from it. But if many men followed that statement to its legitimate conclusion, the Church would soon cease to be any-

thing at all. Let us thank God for the men who, from the time of Paul down to our own day, have struggled to teach that the church must comprehend the highest thought as well as the noblest conduct and purest emotion, and that the "visible church" with all its imperfections is an attempt to embody the invisible ideal. The practical idealism of men like Paul is a force that the world needs now as much as ever. Any deep division between thought and life is a thing against which the prophets and apostles have always fought.

FRIENDLY RECOGNITION AND KINDLY GREETING

Salutation is commanded and salutations are sent; the same word occurs three times in almost as many lines. This may seem to us to be an over-exuberant, gushing form of expression. We of Western temperament are reserved as to the inner life, afraid of emotion, we are ever on our guard against being carried away by enthusiasm, hence it is difficult for us to enter into this appeal for demonstrative fellowship. It is possible for us to carry our reserve too far, and so real, spiritual life may lose something of its strength and beauty by being constantly checked and repressed. Expression is as natural to this form of life as any other. True, there is nothing more offensive than to use words of kindness and endearment when they have become mere empty forms. Such words as "saint," "brother," "experience," "testimony," "salute," must have a real meaning and a tender power, or otherwise they

will disgust the mind instead of cheering the heart. To preserve the true balance between life and expression is not an easy task. But in our appreciation of the words that lie before us on the cold printed page, we must remember the life that long ago gave them sweetness and strength. The people who used them were of a warm temperament and hungering for rich, poetic words to give form to the intensity of their feeling, they were not content to think generous things without expressing them. Their faith was a new thing, their fellowship a sweet surprise, and men who had been slaves and outcasts now felt themselves enclosed in a great communion, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. The church was everything to these men, representing all that the most varied social life can mean to us, and gathering into itself all the cares, interests, and hopes of the new disciples. It was not a side issue but the central attraction of their life. This word "salute" brings back tender memories from that distant time, and suggests that it might be well if we could maintain in pure social forms a free, kindly, religious fellowship.

SAINTS IN STRANGE PLACES

Life defies time and space. These "saints" and "brothers" seem to speak to us across the distant centuries, as in their own day they sent greeting to each other from lands that were far apart. Refined, sensitive people are specially afraid of these two words, and this fear is not without reason, and yet we shall suffer great loss if we miss the

realities that they represent. Saintliness and brotherliness are surely as much needed as ever they were. To Paul "saint" was a word for real life and common people, and he does not scruple to wear it himself or to apply it to imperfect men who have been seized by the heavenly hope. We can believe in the saints of distant times and cloistered places, but saints who to-day tread the common dusty road and glorify the lowly tasks we do not so easily comprehend. "Brother," as the technical term of a special society, the watchword of a political party, or the monopoly of a small sect, we can either tolerate or despise, but brotherhood, as expressing a rich full life and a worthy Christian fellowship, we are in danger of losing.

Paul found true brothers and actual saints in the most unlikely places. The truth can manifest its power anywhere; the soul is not completely at the mercy of its surroundings. Some faithful men stood by the apostle, responded to his teachings, and ministered in some measure to his needs. "The saints in Cæsar's household" sent kindly greetings to those who had been redeemed by the same love. If true religion could flourish at Rome and within range of Cæsar's palace, it can grow and manifest its power anywhere. When our faith in the converting power of the gospel is growing feeble, we need to ponder Paul's terrible description of the wickedness against which the message of love fought its first battles, and then rejoice in the magnificent conclusion, "And such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were

sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. VI, II).

"On the hard Roman world,
Disgust and secret loathing fell,
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell."

There is that in the wicked man, even in the cynical despairing soul, which can respond to the story of the Cross when that story is told with passionate, pleading power by one who has found in it the way of life and the gift of peace. Soldiers and slaves living within the precincts of the imperial palace, yea, some of the disappointed schemers and weary pleasure-seekers in its chambers, have been captured and constrained by "another King, one Jesus," and they rejoice to claim kinship with all who have been touched by the same divine power.

BENEDICTION

The true strong man carries blessings every where and breathes on all a noble benediction. In one prison he sings psalms, in another he creates sacred literature, in both he shows that character is more than circumstance or office. Let us by all means acknowledge the forces that come to us from the past and that stand around us in the present but never in such a way as to forget the power of personality.

Our benedictions, priestly or otherwise, are in danger of growing cold and helpless. It needs the whole man to give a benediction. We must re-think the familiar words and breathe into them

the ancient fire. This world is often cold, and as there are in it curses and contagious forms of evil, how sad it will be if the good men lose power to bless.

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